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THE TIMES

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FIVE TESTS FOR EUROPE

The Times
looks forward to what must
change before any referendum page 21

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tokens
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page 19

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Token page 17



30p

PLUS Inter//face: PlayStation game of the decade

Sterling could vanish in five years

Blair begins battle for the euro

By PHILIP WEBSTER
POLITICAL EDITOR

TONY BLAIR yesterday set Britain on a course that could see the end of sterling within five years.

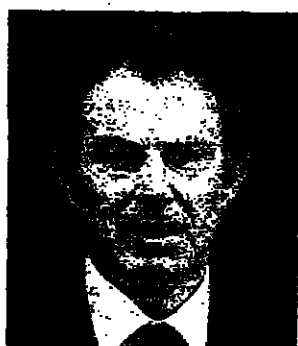
He prepared the stage for one of the biggest political battles of the century by launching a 30-month campaign to persuade the country that it should enter the European single currency.

In a marked shift of gear, the Prime Minister gave business the signal that it has been demanding of the Government's intent to take Britain into the euro if the economic conditions are right.

He announced that legislation is to be rushed through to enable tens of millions of pounds to be spent in each of three departments — Social Security, the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise — to make their computer systems compatible for the euro.

He outlined a timetable for British entry to the euro and the abolition of sterling considerably shorter than that being followed by the 11 European Union countries already in euro-land.

Although Mr Blair insisted that British membership was not inevitable, the reaction of leading business organisations and senior pro-Europeans across the political divide confirmed that they believe he has taken his biggest step so far towards that goal. Companies had complained that Mr Blair could not expect them to



‘Mr Blair has given lobbyists for monetary union the signal they have long demanded’

— Leading article, page 21

Debate, page 10
Peter Riddell, page 11
George Warming, page 25

stump up the £3.5 billion needed to convert to the euro if the Government was not itself giving a stronger commitment, including the spending of cash.

As Mr Blair presented a 65-page “national changeover plan” to prepare the country for the option of going into the euro, he made plain that he would put himself at the head of the “Yes” campaign in a referendum. He told a packed and noisy Commons: “We can no longer afford to pretend either that the euro does not exist or that Britain should not actively prepare for it. Such a denial of reality does not promote Britain's interests, it betrays them.”

The Prime Minister's statement exposed the continuing divisions in both the main parties over the euro, with leading Tory pro-Europeans such as

Kenneth Clarke and Michael Heseltine ostentatiously sitting together as a group and warmly welcoming Mr Blair's words. But the Tory leadership and the large majority of Tory MPs will fight the euro up to and through the next election campaign. William Hague accused the Prime Minister of committing the country to an “unnecessary, expensive and time-consuming” course of action for which the voters had never given their consent.

“Hasn't it been a remarkably short journey from this love of the pound to the plan he announced today to adopt the euro and abolish the pound?” he said, referring to a 1997 article Mr Blair wrote in *The Sun* under the headline “My love for the pound.”

Mr Blair made plain that, as before, there will be no Government decision on the euro this side of a general election. But the clear expectation is that if Labour wins again, that decision will come soon afterwards, possibly in late 2001 if the general election is called in the early summer of that year.

The timetable envisaged by the plan is for a four-month referendum campaign. If the British people vote for entry there would be between two years and 30 months of intense preparations for automatic cash machines and supermarket tills to be changed, ending with the introduction of euro notes and coins. After a further period of up to six months — but possibly as short as two months — sterling notes and coins would vanish.

The plan is silent, however, on the key date at which sterling would be locked into the euro — the effective date that Britain joins the single currency. It is likely to be within a year of the referendum decision but a lengthy, unresolved argument is proceeding between the Treasury, which wants a short period to avoid

Continued on page 2, col 5



The Swiss Army helps rescuers in Evolène yesterday after two avalanches hit the Swiss resort. About 40,000 people have been stranded by avalanches

Rescuers hunt for survivors after avalanche hits Austrian resort

By NIGEL GLASS, IN VIENNA
AND ELIZABETH JUDGE

A HUGE avalanche swept through an Austrian ski resort yesterday, killing at least seven people and burying up to 40 others beneath thousands of tons of snow.

Rescuers in the Tyrolean community of Galtür were frantically trying to reach the trapped as darkness fell. Several people were pulled out alive, suffering from serious injuries. Soldiers joined the hunt, but their efforts were hampered by poor weather, which prevented help being airlifted to the Pitztal Valley.

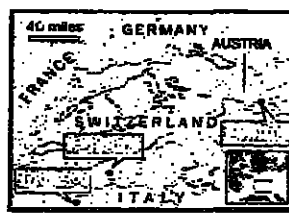
Witnesses said several snowfalls hit the town, which had been cut off for three days, al-

most simultaneously. Plumes of snow blocked out the sun and vibrations triggered falls in neighbouring resorts.

As the emergency services struggled to reach the scene, near the Swiss border, radio appeals for tourists with medical experience were broadcast. Soldiers with night-sights, heat-seeking equipment and sniffer dogs were confined to their barracks by the bad weather.

The area is popular with British holidaymakers. The Foreign Office was waiting for information about possible casualties and ski companies were organising head counts of their clients in the resort.

Chris Laming, communications director of P&O Stena



Line, who has been stranded in Galtür since Friday with his wife Pauline and two children, said: “The sky went black and a huge cloud of powder snow covered the whole village. I saw people running in and out of our hotel. Terrified parents were searching for their children.”

Mr Laming, from Dover, said: “The incredible thing was that there was absolutely

no sound. All we saw was the light go and this swirling powder snow crash into the hotel windows.”

He said the disaster happened as ski-instructors were organising a light-hearted race in a central area called the Dorfplatz. “The slopes are closed, but they were racing inside the village and the Dorfplatz was very crowded. The spot where the avalanche hit is covered with snow many feet deep and that's where they are digging and probing with poles.”

Franz Wenko, a hotel operator, said: “We were drinking hot mulled wine, when suddenly it started. The lights went out. It was dark. There was only dust and snow. We got

out of there as fast as we could.”

Other avalanches have killed at least 11 people throughout Europe and hundreds of Britons are among at least 40,000 people stranded in resorts experiencing their heaviest snowfalls in living memory.

British tour operators made arrangements to transfer clients who had been due to fly to Galtür next weekend to safer resorts. Last weekend, Ing-hams airlifted 12 holidaymakers away because of the risk of avalanche. Britons with relatives in the area can contact the following telephone number: 0043 512 5900 2500.

Snow chaos, page 4

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Visions vie with values

THIS will be a battle royal. Few can have watched yesterday's Commons clash over the euro without thrilling to a sense of political history.

And not just between parties. Watching the isolation of one bench of Tory Europeanists — the tension in their faces and voices — it was hard to believe their differences can be contained much longer.

The impromptu illuminated best. Though vastly significant, the Prime Minister's prepared text was dull and over-long. But William Hague's off-the-cuff response showed resoundingly the power with which the anti-euro cause can be projected: while Tony Blair's rejoinder was a wither-

POLITICAL SKETCH
Matthew Parris

ing demonstration of how Tory lip-service to an open mind on the euro will be blown away.

Mr Blair's Statement was peppered with provisos. Details of how “should it choose to do so, Britain could join” popped up in the first paragraph. “In principle”, and “if”, soon joined the chorus of conditionality.

But to study body language and intonation — head raised for every “when”, voice lowered for each “if” — was to hear more of a precautionary, gabbled “God willing” than

the promise of an open mind. They resembled a legalistic “terms & conditions apply”. Mr Blair might as well have winked.

Most of his Statement sounded like Whitehall-speak, with blank final page and a civil servant's note: “JPM to add thoughtful ending”.

He did. To sound contemplative, Mr Blair reaches for his V-words: “vision” and “values”. These are beginning to excite derision. “We have a vision, but it is a vision that is practical. We should have confidence both in our vision and our pragmatism.”

This was met with hoots. I noticed again a keynote in
Continued on page 2

Unilever makes £5bn payout

Unilever, the Anglo-Dutch consumer goods company, is to return a record £5 billion to its shareholders by way of a special dividend. The company said it had no use for the cash which amounts to 10 per cent of its stockmarket value. The payout amounts to 66.13p a share. Page 25.

Race favourite put down

Bint Allayl, the favourite for the 1,000 Guineas, has been put down after suffering a leg fracture on the gallops at Kingsdown, near Lambourne. She was rated Europe's champion two-year-old filly last season. Page 43.

Lawrence family set to sue police force for damages

By MICHAEL HARVEY
AND STEWART TENDLER

THE family of Stephen Lawrence is expected to launch an unprecedented civil action for damages against the Metropolitan Police.

Doreen and Neville Lawrence and their legal advisers have discussed a claim for negligence after reading a damning report of the police investigation into their son's murder. The judicial inquiry report is to be released today.

The Lawrences also hope that the Crown Prosecution Service will use evidence gathered at the inquiry, headed by

Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, to bring charges of perjury against the five young men accused of the killing. Mr Lawrence said yesterday: “I'm still clinging to the hope of justice. When these guys gave evidence, they were lying and I am hoping that they are going to be tried for perjury. It carries a 15-year sentence. I'll be happy with that.”

Last night Sir Paul Condon, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, put the finishing touches to a ten-point plan to restore public confidence in his force. The project, which will combine a hearts and

minds campaign, is to be announced later today.

The proposals, described as radical, is expected to include plans for officers to wear name tags on duty so that they can be identified. The Yard is also launching training for all senior officers so that they can evaluate murder cases.

A civil action by the Lawrences could see individual officers, many of whom are criticised heavily in the inquiry report, being sued, or Sir Paul Condon as head of the force or both. A family friend said: “No final decision has been taken.”

Lewisham murder, page 5

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Scientists develop test to identify meningitis in minutes

Early treatment of killer disease will save lives and prevent epidemics, Ian Murray reports

A SIMPLE test that can diagnose meningitis within 30 minutes at a cost of just £2 has been developed by British scientists.

The discovery represents a breakthrough in tackling the killer disease as early treatment is vital to save lives and prevent epidemics. The test shows not only if a patient is suffering from the disease but also which of the three main strains.

Vaccine is effective against only the C strain, which occurs in 25 per cent of cases. Since it takes several

days for a vaccine to be effective, the earlier contacts of the sick person are immunised the better the chance of preventing an epidemic.

In the recent outbreak at Pontypridd in South Wales it took three days to establish that group C was involved before starting the vaccination programme. With the new test it would be possible to start immunising people almost immedi-

ately. Julia Warren, of the Meningitis Research Foundation, said: "This will revolutionise diagnosis worldwide and is tremendously exciting. It has enormous public health consequences." The foundation paid £85,000 to fund the research. "This is wonderful value for money," she said.

The new method, developed by scientists at Cardiff University and

the University of Wales College of Medicine, uses equipment that can be bought for only £1,000 and costs £2 per test.

A blood sample is put through an ultrasound scanner enhancer to provide an image that can be easily read. This shows if a meningococcal disease is present and identifies which of the three main strains is involved. Because patients suffering

from suspected meningitis are immediately given antibiotics, it is almost impossible to grow a culture that will show what strain of the disease has caused the illness.

Accurate diagnosis has therefore been possible only by sending a lumbar puncture sample to a laboratory in Manchester where the DNA eventually shows what the patient has been suffering. Trials at

five hospitals in Britain and Ireland have shown that the new test is superior to traditional culture techniques and as effective as DNA tests even though it takes only a fraction of the time and can be performed by staff after very little training.

Edward Kaczmarski, head of the Public Health Laboratory Service's meningococcal reference unit in

Manchester, said: "Knowing what strain of meningitis we are dealing with is important in the management of contacts and the identification of outbreaks."

Details of the way the new test works are shown on *Tomorrow's World* on BBC1 tonight. Philip Monk, a public health consultant, told the programme that the ability to make an early diagnosis would allow an early intervention in an outbreak of the disease and would therefore save lives.

MP quits over leak of report to Cook

By ROLAND WATSON, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE arms-to-Africa affair dealt another blow to Robin Cook yesterday when a Labour MP resigned from the inquiry committee after admitting he had leaked a copy of its findings to the Foreign Secretary.

Ernie Ross, MP for Dundee West, sent a draft copy of the cross-party Foreign Affairs Select Committee findings to Mr Cook four weeks before it was officially published.

Mr Ross admitted his role as Mr Cook was forced to concede in a Commons written reply that he had received a leaked copy of the report, one of the most hard-hitting and critical of a department in recent memory.

Tories on the committee had previously complained that Mr Cook appeared remarkably well briefed on the contents of the report in broadcast interviews before it was published.

Although a severe embarrassment to the Foreign Secretary, the Opposition turned their fire on one of his middle-ranking ministers. Tony Lloyd, whom they accused of misleading the Commons. When asked last week who was the first person in the Foreign Office to see the report, Mr Lloyd side-stepped the question and answered in a written Commons reply that copies were collected on publication day. Cheryl Gillan,

Tory foreign affairs spokeswoman, said that if Mr Lloyd had been aware of the leak, he should resign.

Paul Tyler, the Liberal Democrat spokesman, said the "clear effect" of Mr Lloyd's reply had been "to mislead Parliament". He said Mr Lloyd should come to the Commons to give an immediate explanation.

Mr Ross's admission that he had acted against one of the foundations of the select committee system, that it exists to call the executive to account, failed to surprise some of his own colleagues.

During the protracted committee sessions into the Sierra Leone affair, Mr Ross was often an obstructive force to the questioning of ministers and civil servants, and once even adjourned a hearing because of the line of inquiry taken by one of the committee members.

Dennis Canavan, Labour MP for Falkirk West, said: "Ernie has at last been exposed as a Government lackey. He has abrogated his responsibilities as a parliamentarian." Mr Canavan said the episode also raised questions for Mr Cook. "Robin should have refused to accept it. He is a parliamentarian as well as a Minister."

In his statement, Mr Ross admitted he had breached the confidence of the committee, but had done so because of his concerns about the way the committee's approach.

He said: "I accept without reservation that I was wrong to do this and consequently it was right for me to resign from the committee."

"I express my sincere apologies to the committee and was very grateful for the understanding shown to me by all of them."

A Foreign Office spokesman said that after receiving the leak, the department had neither tried to interfere with the committee nor done its own leaking to the media.



Fiona Jones, MP for Newark, arriving at Nottingham Crown Court yesterday

Candidate and agent 'went on spending spree'

By ADAM FRESKO

A LABOUR MP failed to declare part of her election expenses to run a campaign that helped her win a seat from the Tories at the general election, a court was told yesterday.

Fiona Jones, 41, the Labour MP for Newark, broke election law by spending double the permitted amount. Nottingham Crown Court was told. Mrs Jones and her agent, Des Whitcher, both deny making a false declaration of election expenses in June 1997, contrary to the Representation of the People Act 1983.

Paul Mann, for the prosecution, told the court that after every general election an MP and the agent had to declare what their election expenses amounted to. "There is a legal limit as to how much money a candidate can spend." The limit for Newark was £8,905. Mrs Jones and Mr Whitcher declared £8,514.

"They also declared that was the amount of money they had received in donations to fund that campaign. The allegation is the defendants received and spent more than twice that amount and in declaring £8,514 they deliberately lied," Mr Mann said.

He added: "We will suggest it must have been apparent to these defendants from the outset of this campaign it was go-

ing to be a costlier one than in the past."

The party opened up a bank account and Mr Whitcher became one of the signatories in October 1996. "When Mr Whitcher took over the account it had a little under £2,000. That would have been by no means enough to fight a campaign these two people had in mind."

They received a donation of just over £6,000 for the campaign. "Mrs Jones and Mr Whitcher were then able to begin spending in earnest."

In January 1997 Mrs Jones hired a Toyota until after the election. "She had a car of her own," said Mr Mann, "as did her husband. We suggest the acquisition of this rather smart red vehicle was all to do with image." The court heard that the expenses for the car were incorrectly entered.

After they had hired an office, equipped it and hired three telephonists, there was less than £2,000 in the account. Mr Mann said: "It was within a matter of a few weeks of polling day. In that month, beautifully timed, a company provided a further £10,000."

"According to one prosecution witness, Mr Whitcher confided in her that his policy was to 'spend, spend, spend'. The trial continues.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Carey plan to boycott the Dome

The Archbishop of Canterbury is to lead a boycott of the Millennium Dome celebrations if Christianity is sidelined on New Year's Eve.

Dr George Carey, in an interview in tomorrow's *Catholic Herald*, said that he would prefer to go to church if there was to be no Christian component in the celebrations, and that Cardinal Basil Hume, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, would also boycott the Millennium Dome ceremony.

"If we are invited, and if there is going to be a significant moment of silence, saying the Lord's Prayer together, perhaps one or two other prayers, it will be worthwhile doing that. If we cannot be guaranteed that, we will be in our churches," Dr Carey said. "It will be a wonderful, glorious but essentially factless ceremony and anniversary unless it is connected with the birth of Jesus Christ."

Work is skin-deep

Long-term unemployed will receive funds to have visible tattoos removed to make it easier for them to get a job, in a trial scheme in Coventry. They may also get new haircuts, suits, and counselling for drink or drug problems to help to present a better image. The £2 million scheme for the over-25s aims to get 700 into work in 18 months.

Teaching 'craft'

Teaching is a craft not a profession, the Chief Inspector of Schools said. Chris Woodhead denied the term was critical. "My aim is to rescue teachers from the culture of deference which has for too long emasculated professional confidence. Good teaching is more than that: a complex of technocratic competencies," he said in the annual Ofsted lecture.

Anti-fur Bill

A Private Member's Bill to end fur farming in Britain was unveiled yesterday by Maria Eagle, Labour MP for Liverpool Garston. It has cross-party support and the backing of animal welfare groups. The Bill aims to outlaw the "cruel and barbaric" farming of animals for fur and compensate producers for the loss of their livelihoods.

Joint force plan

RAF Harriers are to be combined with the Royal Navy's Sea Harriers as a single training and command organisation, the Defence Secretary said. Giving details of the plan, called Joint Force 2000, George Robertson said that air crews from the Navy and RAF would retain their uniforms and preserve their "single Service ethos".

Jog the memory

Mice that go running on an exercise wheel whenever they want create more cells in the hippocampus, the area of the brain involved in learning and memory, say scientists at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, California. It is not known if this works for humans, but more people from the institute have taken up jogging.

Visions and values Blair push for euro

continued from page 1

this Prime Minister's approach to persuasion. The word "real" kept cropping up. We must get real. The euro is happening — like it or not. There is no opposing reality, "no going back" (in his words) "from the road to the future." The euro simply is.

This inevitable view of history sounds bold but is secretly timid, side-stepping questions of what is wise or right. "Get into what is the real world today," Blair snapped at the Tory Eurosceptic, Sir Michael Spicer.

But on the attack Blair was formidable. Answering William Hague, he derided the ten-year limit on the Tory "no" to the euro. Was the Tory position (asked Blair) to offer a ten-year guarantee on "a thousand years of history?"

Just as Blair's "if" came with a wink, so had Hague's "not for the next ten years". Blair meant "soon" and Hague meant "never". Each was easily mocked for this.

The Tory leader had a fine old time deriding the Prime Minister for his protestations of even-handedness, and warning the House of his real purpose. Hague's jokes were as good as ever, but beneath lay the force of conviction and a lucid argument. Three quarters of the Tory ranks rallied with relief to this performance, and said as much in their interventions.

But a handful hated it. Sir Edward Heath was utterly dismissive. Kenneth Clarke cheerfully ignored it. Ian Taylor sounded close to snapping and Michael Heseltine sounded sad. When Sir Archie Hamilton, the chairman of the Tory backbench 1922 Committee, offered his colleagues a Majority middle position ("too early to judge") around which they could unite, the Europeanists looked uninterested.

They do judge: the Eurosceptics judge too; the wish to pretend otherwise is ebbing. Yesterday the tide looked irreversible.

Continued from page 1

political uncertainty, and the banks and business, which want a longer time to prepare.

Treasury officials said the Government would attempt to demonstrate that it had achieved economic stability in the run-up to euro entry. They denied that this would amount to "shadowing the euro".

Mr Blair was backed by Paddy Ashdown who said the Government had "crossed the Rubicon" and urged ministers openly to make the case for the single currency. With other Tory MPs growling beside them, Mr Heseltine, Mr Clarke and Sir Edward Heath rowed in behind the Government.

But there was also dissent from veteran Labour Eurosceptics with Dennis Skinner warning against experiments with "genetically-modified currencies" and Tony Benn demanding a free vote for Labour MPs and the Cabinet.

Mr Blair retorted by mocking the unlikely "Thatcher-Portillo-Benn axis" op-

posed to the single currency. He added that once the decision to join the single currency had been taken, Britain could move to membership "considerably faster" than the 11 original euro-zone members. He also stressed the importance of the five economic tests the Government had set for membership being satisfied.

All businesses would need to adapt their systems to the new currency. Smaller businesses could use "off the shelf" systems, but larger firms would face "more intricate challenges". The CBI welcomed the changeover plans but called for a clearer commitment to joining. Other business chiefs raised the issue of economic convergence, calling for a clearer signal on how the Government would get the economics right for Britain to sign up for the euro.

But Ruth Lea, head of policy at the Institute of Directors, criticised the government and said many smaller firms would face huge costs, with no return if they did not deal with Europe.

Irvine defends reforms

Legal profession given warning at Times Law Awards

THE Lord Chancellor last night dismissed concerns that he was rushing the legal profession into radical civil justice reforms, which take effect in April.

Lord Irvine of Lairg said that the draft rules for the changes, which bring in a quicker, cheaper system of civil justice, had been available since last July.

Judges will become trial managers, dictating the pace of litigation, setting strict timetables and imposing sanctions if litigants do not comply.

Some solicitors have expressed fears that they have

not had enough time to get to grips with the final rules, published earlier this month. But Lord Irvine said: "Prudent lawyers have been using them for several months now as a guide to what will be expected of them. They are ready for April's changes. We are on time and the whole profession must be on time too."

Lord Irvine was speaking at the presentation of *The Times* Law Awards, held with One Essex Court, the chambers of Anthony Grabiner, QC.

The winning essay on the title "Access to Justice — Who pays the Price?" was by Mike

Thomas, a student at University College, Oxford. He received £3,000.

Second prize went to Sarah Palin, who is training to be a barrister at the Inns of Court School of Law after taking a history degree at Oxford; and the third prize went to Susana Sava, a Romanian student studying law at the London School of Economics. A special prize went to Rachael Levene, a 17-year-old schoolgirl from Nottingham.

Full details of the prizewinners and the winning essay will be published in *The Times* law pages next Tuesday.

Millennium sign of The Times

By MARK HENDERSON



Headline news: the Millennium sculpture

THE TIMES is to be the official millennium sponsor of the Prime Meridian line at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich. The line of 0 degrees longitude — from which every clock in the world is set — will be marked by an electronic news feed that allows visitors to stand on the meridian and read up-to-the-minute headlines from *The Times* website. The screen will also show facts about time.

At the end of the line will stand a 2.6 metre Times Millennium Sculpture, a striking steel structure with a form that echoes the astronomical

timepieces housed in the Royal Observatory. The sculpture, designed by the architect Cristina Garcia for 41, is a twin to the Times Millennium Sculpture unveiled last year on London's Cromwell Road.

Greenwich has been recognised worldwide as the home of time since 1584, when the International Meridian Conference fixed the precise position of longitude 0. Dr Kristen Lippincott, director of the Royal Observatory, said: "We are delighted to welcome *The Times* to the Greenwich Meridian 2000 project. *The Times* sponsorship of the Meridian Line and the electronic news feed along the line at the Observa-

tory reflect the crucial international importance of the Prime Meridian. The Meridian Line and *The Times* Millennium Sculpture will be focal points for the forthcoming millennium celebrations."

Planning permission for the project was granted until 2003 by Greenwich Council last week, and it will be formally launched in the spring. Building work, expected to last five weeks, will begin as soon as ancient monuments permission is obtained from the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott. Structural engineers are Atelier One and project management will be by Crowe and Nicholas.

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Gates to honour colonial war dead



Indians were killed and 65,000 wounded. The first Indian to be awarded the Victoria Cross was Sepoy Khudadad Khan who in 1914, as the only survivor of a machine-gun team, went on fighting against overwhelming odds at Ypres. Another 11 Indians won Victoria Crosses.

Britain recruited 30,000 Africans into the King's African Rifles, as well as Indians, plus carriers, for the long East African campaign. Among Africans, at least 2,900 soldiers and 39,000 carriers died.

More than 15,000 men of the British West Indies Regiment saw action in France, Palestine, Egypt and Italy, and more than 2,000 of them were killed.

By the end of the Second World War,

Almost 6,000 West Indians served in the RAF, including 300 as aircrew. Some trained first with the Royal Canadian Air Force. A total of 103 were decorated.

More than 375,000 Africans fought in the Second World War in the Middle East, East Africa, Italy and the Far East.

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Snow chaos leaves 40,000 stranded

Adrian Lee and Adam Sage in Paris report on how holiday dreams are turning into nightmares as avalanches threaten key resorts

HUNDREDS of British holidaymakers were stranded yesterday as the worst snowfalls in living memory caused chaos in resorts throughout Europe. It was estimated that at least 40,000 people were cut off by heavy snow or the risk of avalanche.

A group of more than 50 British holidaymakers have been stranded in the Austrian resort of Lech since Saturday, unable to catch flights home.

Among them was Kenneth McKenzie, a solicitor from Chiswick, west London, his wife, Jane, their three children and a schoolfriend.

Snow has been falling constantly since the middle of last week making escape from the region impossible.

According to Mr McKenzie, who was scheduled to fly home last weekend, there is a waiting list of more than 1,000 for private flights out.

"The worst thing is the lack of information," he said. "It could be two days or five days before we get out. We are hemorrhaging money — there is no novelty to it at all and people are frankly fed up."

He has been faxed work by his office and homework for his children, who are pupils at St Paul's in Hammersmith.

According to the authorities in Austria, the stress of being trapped is beginning to cause "psychological tension" in some resorts.

"I have not seen any first flights yet," said Mr McKenzie. "But it is pretty fraught at the tourist office where people are trying to get information."

With only two ski lifts out of more than 30 open, there is little opportunity to ski, he said.

The family is ready to leave at a moment's notice, and is prepared to leave luggage behind if it means getting home.

Helicopters flying injured people out for hospitalisation were yesterday bringing in food and tons of mail, which was piling up because entire valleys were cut off.

Other Britons are stranded in Ischgl, in the Tyrol, and Grindelwald, in the Swiss

Alps, where supplies of fresh food have run out and diesel is being rationed.

It is feared that a massive wall of snow above Grindelwald could be dislodged at any time. Small convoys of lorries, their drivers carrying transmitters in case they are buried, were being allowed to enter the village at dawn, when the risk was at its lowest.

One British company, Powderbyrne, has hired helicopters to airlift 120 clients out of Grindelwald.

Thousands of people are stranded in other Swiss resorts and helicopters were being used to fly British tourists into St Moritz to begin holidays.

In the Chamonix area in France most runs were closed and some holidaymakers were returning home complaining that they had been unable to ski for the majority of their stays.

"It is a complete nightmare," said Natasha Wright, a representative with Ski Weekend, which was using vans to take clients to other resorts where conditions were better. There they faced queues of more than two hours for lifts.

In Holland, the Government has advised people not to take skiing holidays.

"There hasn't been this much snow in 50 years," said Bas Kuik, a spokesman for the Dutch tourist board. It would be the first time the board had advised people to keep away from Austria, Switzerland and France, he said.

But British companies said they had no plans to suspend operations. Many were frantically switching clients away from the worst hit resorts.

A spokesman for the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) said that only a handful of people had cancelled holidays because of the increased avalanche risk.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Office warned Britons to ensure that they had adequate insurance cover and to be aware of the risks of skiing off piste.

The Ski Club of Great Britain said that improved equipment for skiing and snowboarding was encouraging inexperienced people to be over adventurous.

Skis with wider ends and tips, and snowboards, have enabled relative novices to become reasonably accomplished more quickly than in the past and tempted them to seek the thrill of powder skiing off piste before they have sufficient experience.

It also suggested that skiers carry transmitters where there



Workers shovel snow from a roof in Klosters yesterday. Unusually heavy snowfalls in the Alps have triggered catastrophic avalanches and left many villages cut off

was a possibility of avalanche and not to rely on mobile telephones to call for help.

In Chamonix French ski guides said that they knew that a large part of their clientele was drawn to the area by the promise of off-piste skiing and snowboarding and would go elsewhere if this was banned permanently.

Also, the 120,000 people employed by French ski resorts create a lobby group in favour of keeping the slopes open that is difficult for the French Government or local politicians to resist.

Thousands of people, most of them tourists, are stranded at the ski resorts of Klosters and Davos in eastern Switzerland where the maximum avalanche alert is in effect, local authorities said yesterday.

Road and rail access to the Swiss resorts has been blocked and the ski stations cut off with 26 roads impassable in the canton of Grisons.

Transport by helicopter has not been possible due to bad weather conditions.

In the Evolène region in the southern Swiss canton of Valais, dual avalanches on Sunday

night are feared to have killed 10 people after destroying nine chalets.

The bodies of two men in their twenties were found in a car, but eight others — including two French families — are still missing and the chances of finding them are increasingly slim, according to rescuers.

During Monday in the Valais, an avalanche reportedly hit every 20 minutes.

southern Germany, stranding tens of thousands of passengers at train stations and freezing traffic on the autobahns.

The city of Aachen, on the border with Belgium and The Netherlands, was cut off for hours after ten inches of snow fell overnight. Meteorologists called it the area's deepest snow of the century.

Along the swollen Rhine River, meanwhile, the first sand-

bags were being laid in Cologne as a precaution against flooding.

The water was still more than three feet below flood level but was rising, pushed by melting snow and rain from the Swiss headwaters. Shipping traffic was suspended on large stretches of the river.

The chaos extended into eastern Europe and Scandinavia as well.

Two Czech tourists were

missing and feared dead after they were caught in an avalanche on Sunday in Romania's Carpathian mountains, some 203 miles west of Bucharest.

Heavy snowfalls followed by rain had flooded thousands of acres of Romanian farmland and cut off northwestern villages, local media said last night.

The independent Mediafax

news agency said an avalanche had swept away the two Czechs, who had left their group to take a different route on the snowbound Muntele Mic mountain on Sunday.

Snowstorms over the past two days had prevented rescuers from searching for the bodies, it said.

Heavy snows cut off hundreds of villages on the northern border with Ukraine.

Rains and a quick thaw on

the western border with Hungary flooded tens of villages and swamped hundreds of acres of land under various crops.

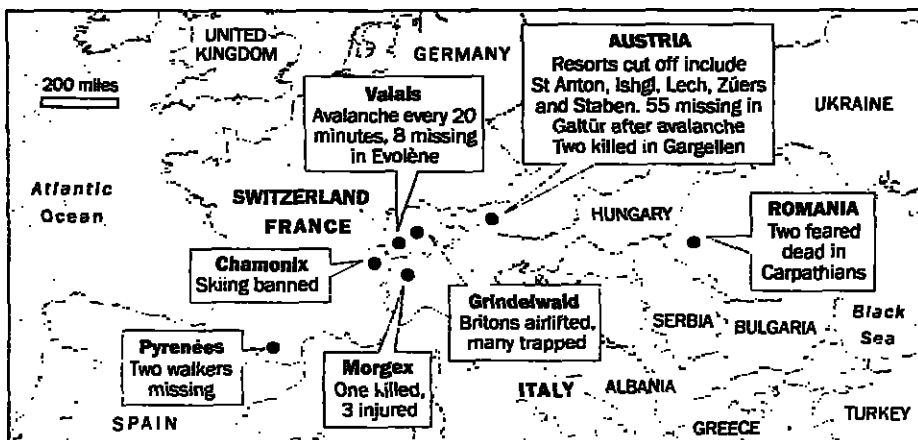
The Romanian Defence Ministry said that it had sent troops with rubber boats to evacuate villagers from a flooded area where soldiers were also helping the population to raise dikes on local rivers.

Meteorologists are predicting more rain and snow throughout the week.

In Finland rescuers called off search operations overnight, amid reports that an avalanche in the ski resort of Ylläs may not have claimed any victims after all.

On Monday reports had indicated eight people were missing. But investigations using heat-detecting cameras had found no sign of bodies, the STT/FINB news agency said yesterday.

In Hungary hundreds of families were evacuated after their homes collapsed due to snow melting after weeks of cold weather, while authorities in the east of the country are preparing for heavy flooding, officials said.



'We're fed up — there's a waiting list of more than 1,000 for private flights out of here'

A 42-year-old man is still missing, feared dead, in an avalanche that yesterday swept away a house in Bristen in the central canton of Uri, from where some 300 people have been evacuated.

Rescuers and heavy equipment had to be ferried in by helicopter because of avalanche risks.

And one of the heaviest snowfalls of the century paralysed travel in western and

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Courts try to curb off-piste thrill-seekers

Heavy falls and warm weather maximising the dangers, writes Adam Sage in Paris

WITH more than 20 people, including six Britons, killed in the French Alps since the start of the year, this holiday season is one of the deadliest on record.

Michel Daloz, a forecaster with the French weather office, Météo France, said "extreme conditions" were to blame.

"Usually we could expect about one metre of snow since the beginning of the season at an altitude of 2,000 metres (6,560ft) in the Alps. This year we have had three metres of snow. That only happens every decade or so."

"But we have also had high winds and spells of warm weather which have made the snow deeply unstable and provoked a maximum risk of avalanches. That is absolutely exceptional. And elsewhere in Europe it

has been even worse than in France."

M Daloz said conditions would improve slightly towards the end of this week and then deteriorate.

But the weather is only part of the explanation for the high death rate in the mountains across Europe. The growing popularity of skiing holidays is another.

The number of foreign holidaymakers who head for the French Alps has increased from 840,000 in 1987 to an estimated 1.6 million this year. Among them are more than 50,000 Britons. About 900,000 French tourists will stay in Alpine

resorts this winter. French police say the result is an inevitable increase in fatal accidents since "there is no such thing as a risk-free mountain".

However, the attraction of off-piste activities, notably snowboarding, has added to the death rate, since these pursuits often take holidaymakers on to slopes prone to avalanches.

One survey in France reported that up to 30 per cent of skiers and snowboarders were tempted to leave official pistes in pursuit of excitement and freedom.

The French authorities have tried to crack down, making it a criminal offence to wander off piste. Yet their

difficulties were illustrated on Monday by the weakness of the case against three Britons who told a French court that they stumbled by accident on to a slope that had been closed in Val d'Isère.

The holidaymakers face fines of Fr5,000 (£510) if found guilty of endangering the lives of their rescuers.

Elsewhere the authorities have tried to reduce risks by closing popular resorts. But with winter holidays generating Fr40 billion for the French economy there is pressure to keep open the pistes.

Joel Eckhardt, a town hall official in Pratz de Lys in the French Alps, said that the Britons among the 5,000 tourists caught in his resort since Saturday had abandoned the slopes. "They are playing cards. I think they are having a very good

time and I think they will come back." French officials are caught between the conflicting demands of a powerful tourist industry and the acute need to impose safety on popular mountain slopes. It is a dilemma they have been unable to resolve.

Earlier this month, for instance, the prefecture of the Haute-Savoie in the French Alps took the unprecedented step of making it temporarily a criminal offence to go off piste.

But it had to back down as ski-lift operators and mountain guides in the town of Chamonix threatened to strike in protest.

Police in Chamonix say one way of reducing fatal accidents is for tourists to seek better information on the prevailing weather conditions. Too often, officers say, holidaymakers ignore safety warnings and the risks.



A tourist carries his daughter from a helicopter after being airlifted from an avalanche zone yesterday

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Black murder victim's family support police

By STEPHEN FARRILL

TWO miles from the place where Stephen Lawrence died, a far more thorough investigation has begun into the suspicious death of another young black man.

Detectives have confirmed that they are treating as murder the death of Sheldon Bobb, a 21-year-old life guard, who was found dying from head injuries outside his house in Lewisham, southeast London. Within 40 minutes of the always being raised on Sunday afternoon, police had sealed off the scene and were conducting house-to-house inquiries. They have not ruled out a racial attack and say that they are keeping an "open mind" about possible motives.

Kerry Rumacre, 19, the mother of one of Mr Bobb's two children, said that she thought the



Sheldon Bobb: found dying outside his home

police were "doing a lot". "They are really trying this time," she said. "Sheldon had loads of black, white and Asian friends. He was just a nice, friendly person. We don't get racial attacks around here. Everyone gets on." Mr Bobb's

family yesterday joined Detective Chief Inspector Chris Horne, who is leading the investigation, at Shooters Hill police station, on the road where Stephen Lawrence was murdered.

Mr Bobb's mother, Glynis Brewster, 43, said: "Sheldon was a loving son and as a person he was very passionate about justice, so if anybody knows anything at all it is really important to be brave or concerned enough to share what you know so that he can have some justice for himself."

Mr Horne said that he believed the attack was carried out with a blunt instrument, but said that no weapon, witnesses or suspects had yet been found. He said that Mr Bobb was "popular", had no known enemies and no criminal record. Neighbours called an ambulance



Mr Bobb's sister, Sherry-Ann, and his mother, Glynis Brewster. "He was passionate about justice," Mrs Brewster said

lance upon finding Mr Bobb, and hospital staff contacted police after becoming suspicious about his head injury and body bruising. An autopsy found that he died from shock and bleeding, and that his injuries were not consistent with a fall or car accident. Mr Horne,

acutely aware of the timing of the inquiry, explained in detail police actions during the first days of the investigation and confirmed that he had spoken to Deputy Assistant Commissioner John Grieve, the racial task force and intelligence experts about trying to match the

attack to other crimes in the racially mixed area. He said that Mr Bobb was found at 2.45pm on Sunday, and that the hospital alerted police at 3.06pm. Police arrived at the scene about 3.23pm, sealed it off and began house-to-house inquiries,

which continued yesterday. There were 20 officers on the case, with "all the full facilities of any murder inquiry", he said. Asked if she was happy with the response, Mrs Brewster said: "It is early days."

Letters, page 21

No charges over death at private prison

By RICHARD FORD
HOME CORRESPONDENT

SEVEN officers at a privately run jail will not be prosecuted for manslaughter over the death of a black prisoner. The Crown Prosecution Service said last night there was no realistic prospect of a conviction.

Alton Manning, 33, a prisoner at Blakenhurst, near Redditch, died in 1995 after being put in a headlock during a struggle when officers removed him from his cell. Last year an inquest jury returned a unanimous verdict that he was unlawfully killed at the prison, run by United Kingdom Detention Services.

He was on remand accused of malicious wounding and illegal possession of a firearm. The seven officers were suspended after the inquest verdict and will remain away from duty until a Prison Service inquiry is completed.

Raju Bhatt, solicitor for Mr Manning's family, said that a formal complaint had been lodged with West Mercia police about the conduct of the investigation into the death.

Any minister guilty of leak will be sacked

By ROLAND WATSON AND MICHAEL HARVEY

A minister found to be responsible for leaking the Stephen Lawrence report will be immediately sacked, Downing Street said yesterday. "The Prime Minister would not countenance a minister doing that," Mr Blair's official spokesman said.

Downing Street gave its warning less than 24 hours after Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, had refused to clear his ministerial team of involvement and failed to say if the culprit would be dismissed if unmasked.

David Omand, the Home Office Permanent Secretary, has begun his internal inquiry into the affair, which saw an injunction being served on *The Sunday Telegraph* on Saturday night, and then lifted on Sunday.

Kate Hoey, the junior Home Office minister with responsibilities for the Metropolitan Police, contacted Mr Omand's office yesterday to inform him that she had not seen a copy of the report.

Paul Boateng, the Minister of State at the Home Office, who, with a select band of senior civil servants in the department, did receive one of the few copies, yesterday avoided

the issue of the leak. At Euston station in London for the launch of a helpline for runaways, he was asked what he would be telling Mr Omand. He smiled and made no comment before leaving.

Mr Omand is also believed to have been told that Lord Williams of Mostyn, the other Minister of State in the Home Office, did not receive a copy.

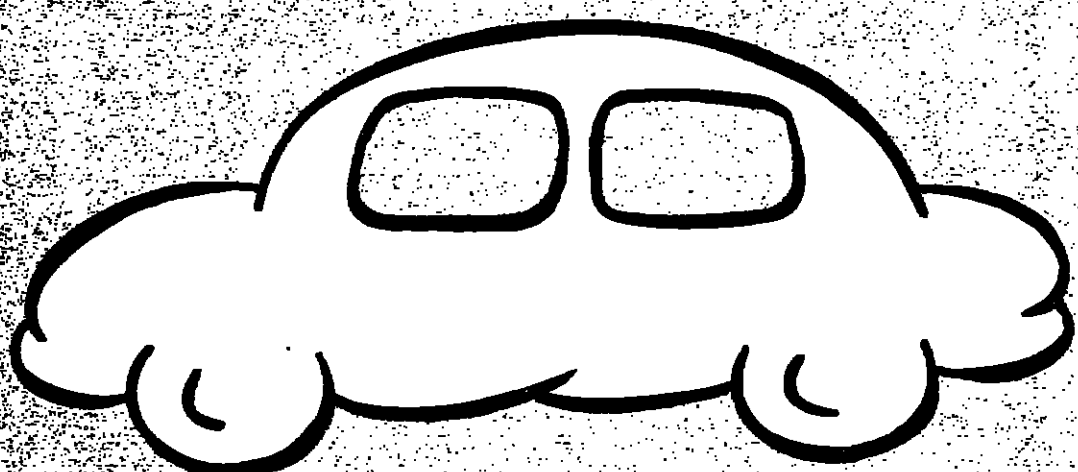
Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, said that the issues raised by the report, which is officially published today, are wide-ranging.

The report will accuse the Metropolitan Police of "institutional racism". Mr Ashdown said that racism was endemic in Britain, and not confined to institutions such as the police.

He said that it would be "a great mistake" if the report was seen as highlighting problems that were exclusively problems for the police. "Racism exists in every part of our society," he said in a speech to mark the Commission for Racial Equality's "leadership challenge".

"Stephen Lawrence died, at least in part, because we have not been sufficiently vigilant against racism."

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\$250,000 or more	Monthly	5.27	4.79
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I was stalked by secretary, says professor

ONE of Britain's leading criminal psychologists told a court yesterday how he suffered a campaign of harassment from his former secretary, who threatened to destroy his career. Professor David Canter, 55, said at Liverpool Crown Court that his tormentor made dozens of "frightening" telephone calls.

Over 18 months, Gillian Hartshorne, 50, made increasingly abusive calls accusing the academic of an adulterous affair with a young research assistant, he said. Mrs Hartshorne claimed she had been forced out of her job to make way for the woman, and made up to 20 telephone calls to Professor Canter's home each night angrily blaming him for being sacked, losing her home and having to have her car put down. She told him repeatedly he would be responsible when she killed herself.

Professor Canter, head of the Centre for Investigative Psychology at Liverpool University, said that the messages left on his answering machine were "very disturbing."

"I felt very distressed and,

Criminal expert tells court of 'frightening' calls and suicide threats, reports Russell Jenkins

on occasions, very fearful that she would follow through with the various threats that are contained within those calls," he said. "There are threats to take her own life. She seems to be implying she is going to get at me, attack me in some way."

Mrs Hartshorne, a divorcee of Great Sutton, Wirral, Merseyside, faces three charges of under the Protection from Harassment Act. She denies two charges of causing fear of violence to Professor Canter and a similar charge relating to Samantha Hodge, a research student.

John Philpotts, for the prosecution, said that Hartshorne

joined the university's psychology department in September 1996 as a secretary on a one-year contract, but blamed Professor Canter when she realised that the contract was not going to be renewed. She suspected that Miss Hodge was being groomed to take over her duties.

Mr Philpotts said: "Mrs Hartshorne began a campaign of harassment against Professor Canter ... There were threats to ruin his career and threats to destroy him."

Professor Canter, who pioneered the use of psychology in identifying criminals and has helped police with investigations, taped scores of the messages that Mrs Hartshorne left him between November 1996 and March last year. Mrs Hartshorne wept as they were played to the court. The trial continues.



Joan Cooper, marking her 106th birthday, and her lifelong friend Margaret Reed: they died within six days of each other



Friends 'died rather than leave home'

BY PETER GLEESON

TWO retired doctors lost the will to live after being told that the Red Cross residential home they had founded 50 years ago was to close, relatives said yesterday. Joan Cooper, 106, and Margaret Reed, 98, died within six days of each other after several weeks in which they are said to have refused to eat anything but toast and water.

The women spent £2,000 on legal fees trying to stop the closure of the

Meadowcroft Residential Home, near Cambridge, where they became residents 16 years ago. Dr Reed died in hospital on February 12, a few days after breaking her hip in a fall. Dr Cooper died six days later at Meadowcroft.

The Red Cross is closing the home at the end of next month because it cannot find enough residents and cannot meet health and safety rules. Dr Reed's niece, Jinx Nolan, said: "I don't think it's a coincidence that they died one month before the place was to

close. They gave up." A long-time friend of the doctors, Dr Elizabeth Shoenberg, said: "They undoubtedly willed themselves to die. Margaret said to me three weeks before she died that they were not going to move her. She said: 'I've always got a way out.'"

The doctors, neither of whom married, had been lifelong friends and pioneering GPs who specialised in treating women and children. In 1949, they helped to found the 14-room care home for the elderly under a 90-year

lease from Cambridge University. Seven years ago, Dr Cooper was awarded a Red Cross medal for her work for the aged. Two elderly residents remain at Meadowcroft and they will be transferred when it closes.

Dorothy Quayle, director for the Red Cross, said the closure had been decided two years ago: "It was no longer financially viable but there are a lot of issues, including health and safety. I'm so sad it has come to this because both doctors had wonderful lives."



Mrs Hartshorne blamed Professor Canter for being sacked

Lady driver, 81, led police a dance

BY SUSIE STEINER

THE 81-year-old mother of Lord Huntingfield has been ordered to return to driving school after leading police officers on a 15-mile car chase.

The Dowager Lady Huntingfield remained oblivious to attempts to pull her over with strobe lights, indicators and a floodlight, a court was told. She repeatedly swerved across the A14 in Suffolk, thinking the police car was attempting to pass her on its way to an accident.

When the police pulled alongside and tried to direct her into a layby, she thought

that they were waving cheerfully at her. Finally the officers overtook and blocked her path.

Lady Huntingfield, of Cambridge, who is the widow of the 6th Baron of Huntingfield, admitted dangerous driving at Cambridge Magistrates' Court on Monday and was banned for 12 months. She was fined £56 and ordered to undergo an extended retest.

"I kept on trying to get out of the way," she said. "I suppose they think that I was mad as a cat."

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Local poll backs big council tax rise

By MARK HENDERSON

A LABOUR council is to raise council tax by more than twice the maximum recommended by the Government after winning the approval of voters in a local referendum.

Householders in Milton Keynes will pay 9.8 per cent more council tax next year after supporting the unitary authority's spending plans in a telephone and postal ballot. Almost 70 per cent voted for the 4.8 per cent rise, or an even steeper rise of 15 per cent. Only 31 per cent supported a lower rise of 5 per cent.

The turnout of 44.7 per cent dwarfed the 26 per cent at the last local elections. The 66,647 who voted made the poll the largest local consultation in Britain.

Milton Keynes is one of a number of councils to ignore guidance from John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, that council tax should not rise by more than 4.5 per cent. Several Home Counties authorities are proposing double-figure increases, including neighbouring Buckinghamshire with 13.4 per cent.

Although Mr Prescott has said he will not flinch from punishing profligate councils, it would be difficult for him to cap Milton Keynes as the Prime Minister has said that

he sees local referendums as part of the future of local government. Councils seeking big tax rises ought to seek a direct mandate from their residents, Tony Blair wrote in a Fabian Society pamphlet last year.

Hilary Armstrong, Local Government Minister, said that the Government wanted to make it easier for councils to hold local referendums. "We intend to legislate to put powers to hold referendums on a firmer footing," she said. Milton Keynes Council and the Electoral Reform Society, which ran the ballot, will be compiling a report and holding a Local Government Association seminar about the vote.

Kevin Wilson, the council leader, said: "We are proud of our innovation and the extent of the turnout. The people of Milton Keynes are used to innovation and they have delivered a clear verdict."

He said that Alan Meale, the Environment Minister, had "saluted" their plans and that the Government would be wrong to cap in defiance of voters' wishes.

The referendum proved that local voters were prepared to pay more to preserve key services, Mr Wilson said. Many council tax-payers had complained before the poll that the votes of those who did not pay, such as students and the unemployed, could force through a big increase but such fears proved wide of the mark.

While about 15 per cent of the residents, less than the national average, get a council tax rebate or pay nothing, 32 per cent of those eligible to vote supported large rises.

Opposition councillors said that the £70,000 spent on the referendum was a waste of money and had obtained a spurious mandate for a proposal that would otherwise have been voted through by councillors at no extra cost.



They're off: Jackie Ballard's constituents at Taunton racecourse decry her views on hunting but admit that she is a "rather good MP"

Outsider in the Lib Dem race could surprise the favourites

James Landale meets the blunt-speaking MP likely to be the only woman contender to succeed Paddy Ashdown

Jackie Ballard would appear from her curriculum vitae to embody all things Liberal Democrat. The MP for Taunton is a former lecturer, social worker, and council leader who studied psychology at the London School of Economics. She is pro-European Union and believes there should be a royal commission on drug abuse.

Whatever the image, the reality of this potential candidate to succeed Paddy Ashdown as party leader is more paradoxical. Mrs Ballard, 46, opposes hunting with a passion, yet in 1997 took from the Tories a constituency stuffed with followers of the hounds. She was recruited to the Liberal Party in 1983 by Mr Ashdown himself, yet has vocally opposed her mentor on several issues. She is an egalitarian who nev-

ertheless backs positive discrimination to get more women into politics. She is on a diet — "three stone down, three to go" — and is a vegetarian who used to sit on the usually carnivorous Commons catering committee.

The common thread is a decisiveness and adherence to principle. As one colleague put it: "Jackie may look cuddly, but she has sharp edges." In her own typically blunt words, she has "balls". At Taunton races the locals in their tweeds and trilbies privately decry her views on hunting but respected the courage of her convictions. "She is also rather a good MP," they admitted. Like all

there is proportional representation at Westminster. "If we are too closely tied in with the Government on anything other than constitutional issues, we risk being less effective in opposing them and in getting our message across. I don't want people to be confused by the differences between the Liberal Democrats and Labour. I don't think we got elected round here by being wishy-washy or middle of the road."

Ashdown's plan to make it party policy that neighbourhood trusts should take control of schools from local authorities. She failed to persuade the party to support plans to ensure at least half of all constituencies had women on their candidate shortlists. Mrs Ballard suggests that the type of leader the party needs now "is someone who will articulate the difference between us and Labour but also adopt a more collegiate leadership — less a one-man band". Were she leader, policy would not change, but there would be more emphasis on redistribution of wealth, fighting injustice and protecting the environment.

These have been Mrs Ballard's concerns since she was a girl. Born in Scotland to a woodcutter and a nurse, she was brought up in Wales, a scholarship girl among the more well-off pupils at a Monmouth boarding school, where she was a self-confessed troublemaker. The young Jacqueline Mackenzie's favourite book was Zola's *Germinal*: the vivid portrayal of poverty and injustice stays with her today.

Her marriage to Derek Ballard ended in 1989. Their daughter, 19, is a photography student. For relaxation, the MP listens to Celtic rock music and swims daily.



Wilson: said the vote delivered a clear verdict

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Staff at the British Library are fighting new rotas

Strike may shut British Library

By DALYA ALBERGE, ARTS CORRESPONDENT

BOOK delivery staff at the British Library have voted for a strike which would force the closure of its reading rooms, only 18 months after the much-delayed opening.

About 100 of the 120 staff who work in the storerooms of the £51 million building supported the strike plan, which is in protest at pay, a new rota system and working conditions which they say are unhealthy. The library will be closed from March 1 for at least a week unless an agreement is reached.

Staff say that the basement storerooms, four floors below ground, have health and safety problems: they have complained about noise, extremes of temperature, lack of natural light and ladders with missing steps which they have to climb to reach high shelves.

"There is also concern about people getting migraines," said one worker, who claimed that an internal health and safety report found 37 recommendations for improvement.

Staff are also unhappy with plans to reorganise their working hours, which will introduce a series of shifts and rotas so that not all are working

at the same time. The management wants to rotate staff between the building's levels so that they do not spend their entire day on the lowest floors. The changes would also allow the library to extend the reading rooms' opening hours, which are fewer than on the former site in Bloomsbury.

Workers say that 45 book deliverers will lose £1,000 from their £13,900 salary because of the changes: 64 will remain at that rate.

John Sheldon, joint general secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Union, which represents 250,000 civil servants including the library's clerical and managerial staff, said: "The plans will damage the quality of services to library users and could put the collection at risk."

The library said that the pay of book delivery staff, who are not trained professional librarians, could rise with overtime to £15,500 and that more than half the staff would be upgraded to higher salaries.

Brian Lang, director of the British Library, said: "I do hope we can resolve this. We would have no choice but to close. Our readers deserve better."

NEWS IN BRIEF

MPs urge speed cut on rural roads

Speed limits on country roads should be cut to 40mph to reduce the number of fatal accidents, MPs said yesterday.

Fifty MPs signed a Commons motion calling for an end to 60mph limits. Some campaigners are also pressing for 20mph zones in villages and the creation of "quiet lanes" on which cyclists, pedestrians and horse-riders would have priority over cars.

Of the 3,599 road deaths last year, 1,938 occurred on minor roads, almost all of which are in the countryside. Ministers are reviewing speed restrictions, but are nervous about imposing low speed limits in remote areas where effective enforcement would stretch police resources.

Midnight Monet

The Royal Academy of Arts will open overnight on Saturday, April 17, to cope with public demand on the last weekend of the *Monet in the 20th Century* exhibition. A record 210,000 visitors have already seen the show.

£17,000 jersey

The red jersey worn by Roger Hunt when he raised the World Cup in 1966 sold for £17,250. Hunt had swapped his England shirt with his West German opposite number, Gordon Mousinho, 44, who was at the final, bought the jersey at Sotheby's.

Runaway help

A free advice line has been set up for the 40,000 children who run away from home each year. The London-based service, run by the Suez Lamplugh Trust, is open from 5pm to 11pm on 0800 096 0096. It is hoped that it will become nationwide.

Tourist record

A record 25.7 million foreign tourists visited Britain last year, spending £12.74 billion. The number from the US and Canada rose 12 per cent, compensating for a 1 per cent fall in those from the Continent, said the National Office of Statistics.

Laid to rest

A "silent" road surface costing £2.6 million is to be put on the M65 between Burnley and Huncoat, Lancashire, to protect owls. Conservationists said that owls hunted by listening to the movement of prey and traffic noise was driving them away.

Wild at art

A painting by an elephant fetched £500 at a Sotheby's auction. The work, described as abstract, was painted by an elephant at an animal hospital in Thailand after it was given a brush by a visiting artist. The proceeds will go to charity.

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BY ALEX O'CONNELL

150

THE € DEBATE

Hague accuses 'foolish' Blair of ditching pound

BY JAMES LANDALE
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE COMMONS

WILLIAM HAGUE accused Tony Blair of using the National Changeover Plan to bounce Britain into joining a single European currency as MPs debated the Prime Minister's statement.

The Tory leader said it was "a long list of clichés and verbiage" accompanied by little information. He mocked Mr Blair for an article "My love for the Pound" which he wrote for *The Sun* before the general election.

"Hasn't it been a remarkably short journey from this love of the pound to the plan you announced today to adopt the euro and abolish the pound?" he asked.

Mr Hague said: "While [Mr Blair] trumpets his love for the pound, it is his love for the euro which is the love that dare not speak its name."

He told the Prime Minister: "Isn't it the case that you have today committed the country to a course of action that is unnecessary, expensive and time-consuming, and for which the British voters have never given their consent?"

He added: "Isn't it foolish to embark on a changeover plan without the faintest idea how the necessary convergence of the economies is to be achieved?"

Mr Hague declared: "Instead of giving people the choice, your National Changeover Plan is part of a national handover plan, to hand over the economic and political freedoms of this country."

Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, said the Government had "crossed the Rubicon". "I greatly welcome that, even though the Government has crossed the Rubicon by the tiniest millimetre, and even though the Government tries to pretend it has not

crossed the Rubicon." He insisted: "Unless the Government is prepared to come forward now and argue the case for the euro, then it risks this decision, the most important facing the UK, being lost by stealth. Now the Government is going to have to defend its own position — something it has not done before."

Kenneth Clarke, the former Tory Chancellor, told the Prime Minister: "I welcome the marked change of tone which today's statement represents. I particularly welcome the fact that you have reached agreement with the representatives of the majority of British business on the practical steps that are now to be taken to give some reality to your policy of 'prepare and decide'."

He added: "Would you undertake that you will from now on continue to put your mouth where you actually think our money ought to be?"

Giles Radice (Lab, Durham N), chairman of the Treasury Select Committee, urged: "The time has now come for a great national debate to inform the British people about the euro and the British Government must lead that debate."

Sir Edward Heath, the former Tory Prime Minister, told Mr Blair: "You have been absolutely right in everything

ed by one thing, economically throughout the world in its history. There is no single market in the world which has more than one currency and that is our position today — we cannot carry on successfully in a single market if we go for multiple currencies."

Tony Benn (Lab, Chesterfield), the former Cabinet Minister, asked Mr Blair: "Will you make clear that when the information published by the Government goes out, every elector is told that if Britain is a member of the single currency, they will lose the right to elect or to remove on polling day those who make the economic decisions that affect our lives?"

Michael Heseltine (C, Henley), the former Deputy Prime Minister, said the changeover plan would be "widely welcomed" and marked a "step forward in the Government's intention to join the single currency". He also urged Mr Blair to create and lead an all-party group pushing for entry to the euro.

Ian Taylor (C, Esher and Walton), a former Tory minister, also welcomed the plan and added: "Anyone who opposes the national changeover plan must in fact wish not to have a referendum because the referendum can only come if the British people have prepared."

Dennis Skinner (Lab, Bolton) spoke of the failures of Europe's common agricultural and fisheries policies and warned Mr Blair: "Beware of those carrying out experiments in genetically modified currencies."

John Taylor (UUP, Strangford) warned that the euro was politically driven and would lead to a United States of Europe. "The Prime Minister's statement could be the beginning of the end of the United Kingdom," he said.



Tony Blair announcing the details of the National Changeover Plan for joining the European single currency in the House of Commons yesterday

'Not a change of policy, but change of gear'

THIS is an edited version of the Prime Minister's statement to the Commons:

"On 21 October, 1997 the Chancellor of the Exchequer said he would publish details of how, should it choose to do so, Britain could join the euro. Today we publish an outline of the National Changeover Plan as a basis for consultation."

"The Chancellor said that in principle the Government was in favour of Britain joining a successful single currency. And he set out the conditions necessary to satisfy our national economic interest."

"It is conditional. It is not inevitable. Both intention and conditions are genuine. This is the right course for the country, to resolve this issue for the British national interest, the future of our people and their well-being. And it is that national interest that will always come first."

"I do not dismiss the constitutional or political issues. They are real. Monetary union is a big step of integration. But so was the Single European Act. And the EU itself."

"And if joining a single currency is good for British jobs and British industry, if it enhances British power and

BLAIR'S STATEMENT

British influence, I believe it is right for Britain to overcome these constitutional and political arguments and the fears behind them."

"For the very reason of the sensitivity of these arguments, we have also said clearly: the Government can recommend. But the people will decide in a referendum."

Mr Blair continued: "What we announce today, therefore, is not a change of policy. It is a change of gear."

"The euro is a reality. It exists. Eleven out of 15 other EU members are in it. It represents 20 per cent of world income, as big as the US. It will be the currency of 290 million people."

"Fifty per cent of our trade now is with the eurozone. The launch of the euro means already that an increasing number of UK firms are starting to use the euro, not just big business like British Steel or Ford or Philips or ICI and Unilever."

Mr Blair added: "The public sector will give a clear sign of its commitment to prepare. Each department now has a minister responsible for

euro preparations. Where computer systems are being upgraded, all departments will build in euro compatibility where that represents value for money. In the case of the DSS, the Inland Revenue and Customs, the scale and complexity of their computer systems make advance preparations critical."

"They may need to spend some money prior to a referendum to make their IT systems euro-compatible... such expenditure... will amount to some tens of millions of pounds spread over a number of years."

"Overall, we believe it should be possible to move in four months from a Government decision to a referendum; in 24-30 months from a positive referendum result to the introduction of notes and coins; and a further six months before sterling notes and coins are withdrawn."

"This means that the whole process from a positive referendum result to the withdrawal of sterling could be completed in around three years, considerably faster than the period required for the first wave of EMU participants."

Mr Blair went on: "It is worth summarising the economic tests the Chan-

cellor set out: sustainable convergence between the UK and countries within the euro-zone; flexibility to adapt to change in the UK and in continental Europe; the impact on investment and the UK financial services industry; and whether joining the single currency would be good for employment."

"Three points should be emphasised. The first is that economic convergence must be not momentary but, as far as we can accurately foresee, sustainable. We cannot say that yet."

"The second point is that these are early days for the euro itself. It is sensible to see how it settles down and how the ECB steers a path consistent with both strong economic discipline and the avoidance of deflation."

"And third, it will take some time to make a clear judgment about whether the direction of economic reform in Europe will enable us to meet the tests, particularly on flexibility and jobs."

"The single currency alone won't make Europe prosperous. The single currency plus fundamental reform in labour, capital and product markets and in our welfare systems, can do so."

"Madam Speaker, I commend this statement to the House."

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THE € DEBATE

Britain could switch to euro in 40 months

THE PLAN

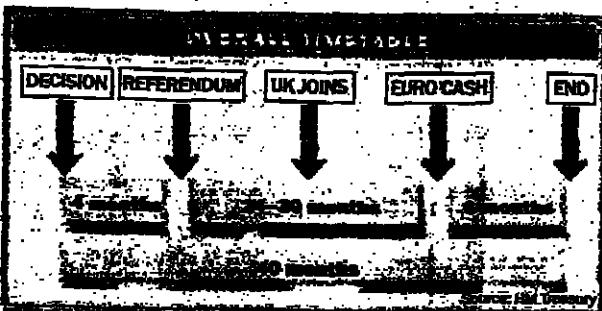
By Jill Sherman and Roland Watson

BRITISH notes and coins could be replaced by the euro in less than 40 months from a Cabinet decision that the UK should join a single currency. The Government's National Changeover Plan shows that Tony Blair aims to speed up the process so that the UK can prepare more quickly than first-wave entrants managed.

While Treasury sources were making clear that no decision would be made till after the next election, the document gives business the green light to speed up its preparations. A decision could be made as early as late 2001, with Britain possibly joining economic and monetary union by 2003.

The Government's blueprint for change suggests that it would take four months from the time the Cabinet decided the conditions were right to enter the euro for a referendum to be held.

This would depend on how quickly business managers could push through a referendum Bill — which was done within four months for the Scottish and Welsh plebiscites.



A referendum could then be held within two months. If the result was positive it would be put to Parliament in a comprehensive Bill, which could take a year to get through.

Before the UK could join, the European Commission and the European Central Bank would need to report to the European Council on whether the UK had met convergence criteria.

The document is imprecise over when Britain would technically join the single currency. It argues that the timing would depend on whether different sectors of the economy were ready, particularly the banks and revenue departments.

It argues that the amount of pre-planning and practical work that takes place from now would be crucial in determining the speed of the changeover.

Some high-street banks could take up to three years to prepare while the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise could take between 12 to 18 months and financial markets would need to prepare for about 12 months.

But it would be retailers, utilities, public-sector services and organisations involved in producing and distributing euro notes and coins which would dictate when the currency could be introduced. The Royal Mint would require up

to 30 months to provide sufficient coins.

Provided detailed planning is taken forward now, this period could be completed within 24 to 30 months, the document suggests. It adds that the final period to the day when sterling is withdrawn from circulation would be up to six months, in line with advice from the Business Advisory Group — but could be as short as two.

The paper admits that further work with the banks and revenue departments would be necessary for a more precise timetable.

It suggests that a lot can be learned from the timetable of the first wave of single-currency entrants. It points out that member countries decided to go ahead in May 1998 and it will take a further 30 months before the euro is adopted fully. Britain could do it at least ten months quicker, the Government says.

Leading article, page 21



All change for the pound: shoppers and traders in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, tried out the euro last November

Telltale signs confirm it is when, not if

The medium was the message. Sometimes what matters is who says something and how they say it, as much as what they say. The real significance of yesterday's announcement about the National Changeover Plan was that it was made by Tony Blair — and the carefully-crafted formal statement revealed less than the tone of his replies to MPs' questions.

As Paddy Ashdown and other prominent pro-Europeans pointed out, Mr Blair signalled a major step forward. It was more than what Mr Blair called "a change of gear", if not perhaps the crossing of the Rubicon claimed by Mr Ashdown.

Mr Blair is now planning on the basis of the euro succeeding, and Britain joining. The formal policy may still be "prepare and decide", but in practice, it is "prepare and enter provided, or rather when, economic conditions are right". And the latter conditions are largely in the eye of the beholder, though Mr Blair underlined continuing British worries over the need for further reform in European labour, capital and product markets — "a new social model for a new European reality".

Yet there is now no doubt about where either Mr Blair or William Hague stands on the central political question facing Britain. The caveats are still there, reflecting the natural desire of any leader not to box himself in. But the battle lines are clear. Mr Hague underlined his fundamental opposition in principle to joining a single currency, echoing Hugh Gaitskell's famous, or infamous, reference in 1962 to a thousand years of history. But Tory divisions have seldom been greater with Michael Heseltine, Kenneth Clarke, David Curry and Ian Taylor sitting together like a party within a party.

Mr Hague was right that

the Government is trying to create a step-by-step process whereby membership is seen as inevitable in the referendum because the euro has become an accepted part of life. That will be hard for the Tories to fight.

Yesterday's plan is intended to convince business of the seriousness of government preparations. Whitehall departments will spend "tens of millions" which will be authorised in the next few months. However, the Government has still not named a target date, so a degree of uncertainty remains. While Mr Blair shifted policy, several big questions remain unanswered. First, as Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, told MPs yesterday morning, monetary policy is not aimed at assisting entry into the euro. Talk of shadowing the euro is officially denied: instead, the aim is to "demonstrate delivering stability, including the exchange rate". The intention to pursue convergence will have to be more explicit.

Second, Mr Blair said: "We want to keep open the option of making a decision early in the next Parliament to join." The Blair camp claims that this could mean retaining the current formal approach in an election campaign. But Robin Cook is not alone in believing that the Government will have to declare its hand over a central issue of the campaign.

Third, and most important, will the Government take the lead in what is in effect a three-year referendum campaign? Mr Ashdown argued that leadership by stealth cannot continue. As Mr Heseltine urged, Mr Blair has to take a lead in what will be a cross-party campaign. Yesterday, he picked up the euro standard, even if he is not yet waving it.

Peter Riddell
ON POLITICS

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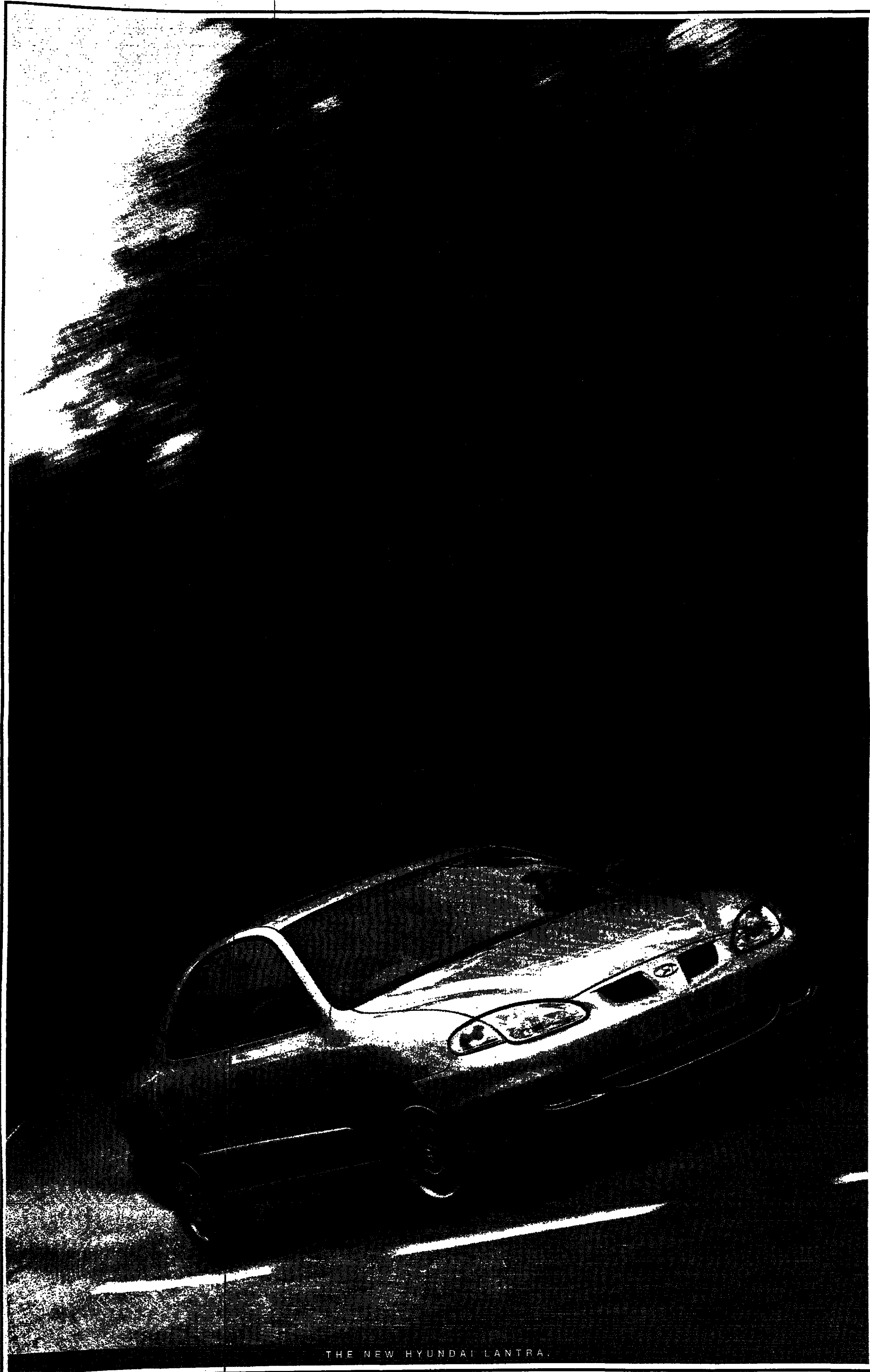
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Serb death shows reality of ceasefire

BUKOS is a pimple of a village that does not even appear on the map. Yet, while international mediators in Rambouillet agonised over how best to window-dress deadlock to the waiting world, the war visited its 800 inhabitants.

The skirmish there was barely significant, even by the standards of Kosovo's low-intensity conflict. Doubtless the handful of casualties would have been little more than statistics on an official release were it not for the presence of the media.

Kosovo, technically, slumbers under a ceasefire that is supposed to last for the duration of Rambouillet's negotiations. On Monday morning, however, a Serb offensive west of Vucitrin, about 21 miles north of Pristina, displaced more than 4,000 refugees in four hours of fighting.

The same night, Kosovo Liberation Army guerrillas came down from the snow-covered slopes and fired on Serb houses in Bukos, two miles to the south. One Serb civilian was

Peace talks give

Kosovo village

a taste of war,

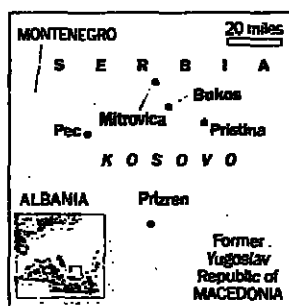
Anthony Loyd

in Bukos writes

killed and two others seriously wounded. Early yesterday, the mixed Serb-Albanian village filled with Serb police who escorted a team of investigators to the dead man's house while a small Yugoslav Army unit, backed by a tank and mortar crew, took up positions on the slopes to the south.

The KLA held positions to the west, north and east. They dropped a mortar round into the yard of the dead man's house as the Serb investigators entered. It wounded five policemen and a press photographer.

The police called up army re-



with the tank, and chaos descended in about two seconds. The sky and fields resounded with whistles, buzzes, cracks and thumps. Everyone appeared to be rolling around in the snow and mud. Our Land Rover picked its moment to slide gently off the track, sinking up to its axles in half-frozen slime.

We cursed and sweated and pushed, to no avail, as the bedlam continued. About 20 minutes later the shooting had stopped and I was smoking a Lucky Strike with a Serb officer. "So who is guilty today then, comrade, the Albanians or us?" he asked.

Around him, troops were regrouping in the good-natured mood that follows victory. The KLA, true to form, had fallen away from the slopes.

Bukos, in its entry to war, a tiny place on an average day, had its anonymity lifted by one dead and several wounded Serbs, together with an unknown number of guerrilla casualties. And that was during a ceasefire.



A Serb woman, whose husband was killed outside their house in Bukos, carries her belongings, including a rifle and shotgun, from the building yesterday

Escape route mined

Pristina: Yugoslav Army engineers have placed explosives on a key bridge connecting Kosovo's capital, Pristina, with the Macedonian border, according to a monitor with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe yesterday.

He said he witnessed about 20 army engineers burying a command cable of the sort that would be used to detonate explosive charges. The cable ran from a hut that was being fortified on the Pristina side of the bridge to the span itself.

An American diplomat with long experience in Yugoslavia said he understood the bridge was mined. "We have been reliably informed that the bridge is mined and could be blown at any time," he said.

A Western diplomat in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia said: "The Yugoslav Army wouldn't be a match for Nato but they would use every means to frustrate an attack, including blowing up bridges and tunnels that Nato forces would want to use to enter Kosovo."

The bridge wired for detonation would be the main escape route for monitors. (Reuters)

British troops on hold during talks stalemate

BY TOM WALKER IN RAMBOUILLET AND MICHAEL EVANS, DEFENCE EDITOR

THE Rambouillet peace talks on Kosovo passed the final deadline without a deal yesterday, with neither Albanians nor Serbs signing anything.

Contact Group ministers claimed, however, that there had been an historic breakthrough. A new constitution for Kosovo appeared to have been agreed, but Belgrade said it was still a long way from accepting a Nato force on its territory.

It was agreed that the talks should continue on Monday, March 15, at the Normandy town of Evreux. James Rubin, the US State Department spokesman, said the interval would give the Albanians time to consult their people, while the Serbs would have to bring themselves to accept that international troops were an inevitable consequence of any peace deal.

Last night, the planned deployment of 2,000 British troops in Skopje, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was postponed, following the announcement in Rambouillet. Troops from the proposed leading British armoured battle group, based on the King's Royal Hussars, had been due to arrive in the region by the end of this week to prepare for immediate deployment into Kosovo once a peace deal was signed.

However, with the inconclusive result of the talks, Operation Agricola, the British code name for the planned Kosovo mission, has been "put on hold". Only hours before the announcement that another meeting had been fixed, George Robertson, the Defence Secretary, said that the 2,000 British troops would be arriving in the Greek port of Salonika and in Skopje by the end of the week.

However, after hasty meetings at the Ministry of Defence, the deployments were shelved. The troops involved, all based in northern Germany, will continue to make preparations for a Kosovo mission, but without any firm guarantee that approval will be given. The first batch of tanks and armoured combat vehicles is due to arrive at Salonika on board the Royal Fleet Auxiliary ferry, *Sea Centurion*, tomorrow.

The reputation of Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, has taken a beating over the past few days, as her efforts to secure an Albanian signature to at least half the peace plan were consistently thwarted by Hashim Thaci, the 29-year-old Kosovo Liberation Army leader. However, she said last night: "We have

decisively broken the stalemate that hung over Kosovo for so long."

Airstrikes were also off the agenda. Mrs Albright spoke only of "deterrence" towards Serb security forces, and warned the KLA not to provoke any incidents while a settlement was possible.

Diplomatic sources in Belgrade said that a new United Nations force was being considered to implement a peace plan. Some even suggested that the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) could be asked to head a force, even though it has no military apparatus.

Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, lost his temper after a string of questions about the peace force and said British



British Nato troops train in the snow in Skopje

troops would only be committed to Kosovo under Nato leadership. The Americans said they would also only contribute troops if they were Nato-led.

Mr Cook said: "We want a tried and trusted command structure." He added that he hoped Russian troops would join, making the force more palatable to Belgrade.

Hubert Védrine, the French Foreign Minister, denied that the Albanians had persuaded the Rambouillet mediator to include a referendum in the constitution, which would provide a clear route to independence after three years.

Mrs Albright denied the Kosovo Albanians had been cheated by Rambouillet. Do not despair, support those of your leaders who have supported peace, and America will stand with you," she said.



Firing practice continues for the Nato Extraction Force in Macedonia yesterday as talks stall

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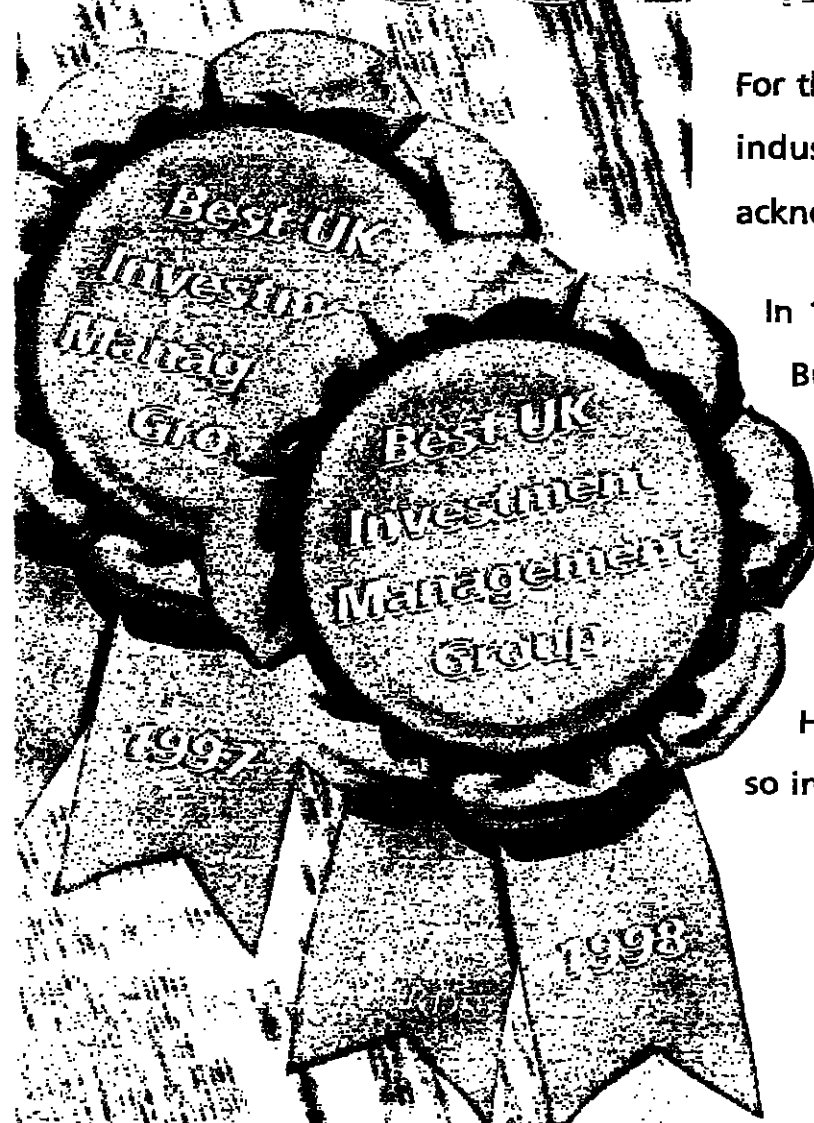
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US governors back Bush for president

IN AN unusually early show of support, at least half of America's Republican state governors are ready to endorse the White House ambitions of George W. Bush.

Their backing emerged in Washington yesterday as word spread on the political grapevine that Mr Bush, Governor of Texas and son of the former President, was preparing to take his first official step towards running for President. He is expected to announce the formation of an exploratory committee within three weeks.

At the same time, Pete Wilson, the former Governor of California, confirmed that he would not be entering the Republican presidential primaries, having concluded that Mr Bush has gained so much momentum that his early lead in several key polls is insurmountable. With Mr Bush already competing for the attention of big donors, Mr Wilson realised he would be unable to raise the \$25 million (£15.4 million) needed to run a credible campaign.

Mr Bush has conceded that he is "warming to the task" of trying to win back the White House that his father lost to Bill Clinton in 1992. "Tim McGough, a Massachusetts politician, said that Mr Bush told him of his plans for the exploratory committee in a call last week and said: 'I have a feeling of calm inside myself.'"

Earlier concerns that Mr Bush might not run out of consideration for the impact on his wife and teenage twin daughters are fading. They are now expected to support his candidacy.

On the crucial money front, Mr Bush has begun privately assembling a team to raise \$25 million with phone calls and

Top Republicans lend support as favourite warms to the task, Ian Brodie writes

meetings in Austin, the Texas state capital, and Washington. He has seen investment bankers from California, East Coast property tycoons and wealthy Texas oil men. Contributors to past campaigns of the elder Bush are being recruited for his son.

Opinion polls show Mr Bush to be the leading contender for the Republican nomination, but nipping at his heels is Elizabeth Dole, wife of Bob Dole who lost to Mr Clinton in 1996. She has resigned as president of the American Red Cross to give serious thought to running.

Both Mr Bush and Mrs Dole beat Al Gore, the likely Democratic candidate, in pollsters' mythical match-ups. The support for Mr Bush by as many as 16 of America's 31 Republican governors was seen as unprecedented for a non-incumbent White House hopeful who has yet to declare officially. Their ranks grew during the three-day winter meeting of the nation's governors in Washington.

"Nobody wants to be left behind," said John Rowland, Governor of Connecticut. Marc Riccio, Governor of Montana, said: "They like him, they trust him and they think he can win." Frank Keating, Governor of Oklahoma, said: "He's done an excellent job as Governor. He appeals to a cross-section of the people. And I really think Texas represents the rest of the country."

Mr Bush's popularity in Texas was proved last November when he was re-elected in a landslide. He enjoys the nickname of "Dubya" from his middle initial, spoken in a Texan twang. He has already developed a thick skin for questions about his personal life, especially his wilder, younger days. He talks openly about his inability to handle alcohol which he swore off 12 years ago when he was 40. He refuses to answer questions about possible drug use in his youth.

Mr Bush had a chance to size up the White House for the first time since his father departed during a dinner that Mr Clinton gave for the governors. He also clashed with the President during a discussion by opposing an Administration plan to tie federal education aid to school performance. While agreeing with Mr Clinton's goals for better schools and teachers, Mr Bush demanded flexibility in the way funds from Washington are spent.

"The federal Government should be a limited partner. If they feel like sending money to the states, fine, but don't tell us how to run things," he said.

Fellow governors backing Mr Bush include moderates and conservatives, including his brother Jeb who is Governor of Florida. George Bush Sr, living in retirement in Houston, is urging his son to run.

George W. Bush says that, after early doubts, he views with growing enthusiasm the task of trying to win back the White House his father lost to Bill Clinton



George W. Bush says that, after early doubts, he views with growing enthusiasm the task of trying to win back the White House his father lost to Bill Clinton

Texas awaits verdict on 'rider from hell'

FROM DAMIAN WHITWORTH IN WASHINGTON



John "Bill" King is escorted from court after giving evidence earlier this week

A JURY retired to consider its verdict last night after a prosecutor told it that a white supremacist was one of three "riders coming straight out of hell", who had dragged a black man to an agonising death behind a pick-up truck.

The 11 whites and one black deliberating at the courthouse in rural Jasper, east Texas, have to decide first if John "Bill" King is guilty of killing James Byrd and then if he deserves the death penalty. In his closing argument, Pat Hardy, the prosecutor, said that the evidence was incontrovertible.

"After they dragged that poor man and dragged him to pieces, they dropped him at a cemetery to show their defiance of God and Christianity and everything most people stand for," he said.

Under Texas law, Mr King would receive a lethal injection, rather than a life sentence, only if

he was found to have murdered his victim while committing another crime. Prosecutors have been pushing hard to show that Mr Byrd was being kidnapped when the murder took place.

In a bid to save his client from execution if convicted of murder, Brack Jones argued for the defence that the chaining and dragging was the method of the killing, not intentional kidnapping.

Before concluding its case, the prosecution provided some of the most gruesome evidence of the trial when it called a pathologist who said that he believed Mr Byrd was alive and writhing in pain as he was dragged by his chained ankles along a rough road for more than two miles behind the truck. He was decapitated when he hit a concrete culvert in the road.

"He was attempting to keep his head off of the pavement. He was

conscious," said Tommy Brown, who performed the autopsy on Mr Byrd a day after the murder.

The defence in the case consisted of just three witnesses, including a fellow inmate of Mr King's during an earlier spell in prison who had applied some of the defendant's many tattoos and said they were not racist but "looked cool, that's all".

Mr King, 24, is accused of being the ringleader who wanted to kill to gain publicity for his new racist gang when he and his flatmates, Lawrence Brewer, 31, and Shawn Berry, 24, picked up Mr Byrd as he was hitchhiking home in the early hours.

They are alleged to have taken him to a back road and given him a severe beating with various tools before shackling him with the 24ft logging chain for his final journey.

The other two defendants face trial later this year.

US blocks satellite sale to Beijing

BY IAN BRODIE

THE Clinton Administration yesterday blocked the sale of an advanced communications satellite to China, citing national security. The satellite, costing \$450 million (£280 million), was to have provided a mobile telephone network stretching over much of Asia.

Washington refused export licences to Hughes Electronics because of concerns about the network's probable value to the Chinese military. There were also worries at the Pentagon that the technology needed to place the satellite in orbit would help the Chinese to make their fleet of intercontinental ballistic missiles more accurate.

Parliament puts Cresson to test

Brussels: The future of Edith Cresson, the embattled European Union Commissioner, appeared more uncertain last night after she submitted to a humiliating public interrogation by the European Parliament and insisted that she bore no guilt for alleged fraud and nepotism committed under her stewardship (Charles Bremner writes).

The most embarrassing moment for the former French Prime Minister came when Michael Tappin, a British Labour MEP, distributed a file on her employment of René Berthelot, a dentist friend from her home town of Châteleraut, where she was a long-serving mayor. Mr Tappin called on her to resign for "creating the atmosphere of cronyism".

Anwar names attacker

Kuala Lumpur: Anwar Ibrahim, right, Malaysia's former Deputy Prime Minister, directly implicated a former police chief as the man who beat him in custody, an inquiry heard (David Watts writes). It was the first time that Tan Sri Rahim Noor had been blamed for the beating which gave Mr Anwar a black eye and caused a world outcry.



Eritrea under attack

Addis Ababa: The war in the Horn of Africa worsened with Ethiopia launching a big offensive, including airstrikes, against Eritrea. The Eritrean Foreign Ministry announced the offensive as a communiqué in Addis Ababa said the Ethiopian Air Force and heavy artillery units had attacked positions on all three fronts on Sunday and Monday. Eritrea said that its forces had destroyed nine Ethiopian tanks and captured two, while repelling the western front assault. (AFP)

Tortured men backed

Harare: A magistrate here has ruled that two journalists tortured by military interrogators last month should be allowed to visit a London clinic specialising in therapy for torture victims (Jan Raath writes). The decision came after lawyers for Mark Chavunduka, 37, editor of the *Standard*, and Ray Choto, 33, a reporter, submitted medical evidence of their injuries. But state lawyers immediately prevented their departure for London with a High Court challenge to the ruling.

Victim left arm behind

Marseilles: A motorcyclist, suffering from shock, left part of an arm at the scene of an accident, but doctors reattached it after police found the limb. Olivier Fauré, 21, who was hit by a car in southern France, was taken home by another driver without realising his left forearm had been severed. His mother alerted emergency workers while M Fauré was taken to hospital. Police found the arm dozens of yards from the accident scene and it was reattached in a 12-hour operation. (AP)

Briton held hostage

Bogotá: A Briton is among 16 foreigners being held hostage by Colombian rebels, the head of the country's anti-kidnapping unit said. The others are a Japanese, two French, four Italians, three Spaniards, one Algerian, three Venezuelans and a Chilean. Several of the foreigners, being held by three different groups, were seized at random at roadblocks which the rebels routinely set up. (AFP)

Ukraine leader held



Moscow: Pavlo Lazarenko, left, a former Prime Minister of Ukraine arrested last week for trying to enter the United States without the correct documents, is in custody awaiting a decision by immigration authorities (Anna Blundy writes). Ukraine has sought his extradition over the theft of more than £1.2 million of state property.

'Pregnant' baby saved

Hanoi: A four-month-old Vietnamese girl with a severely distended stomach and vomiting was found to contain the developing foetus of her two siblings. Tran Dong A, a surgeon at Ho Chi Minh City's Pediatric II Hospital, said the foetuses had been removed in a three-hour operation. He added that the baby was thin but in a stable condition. (Reuters)

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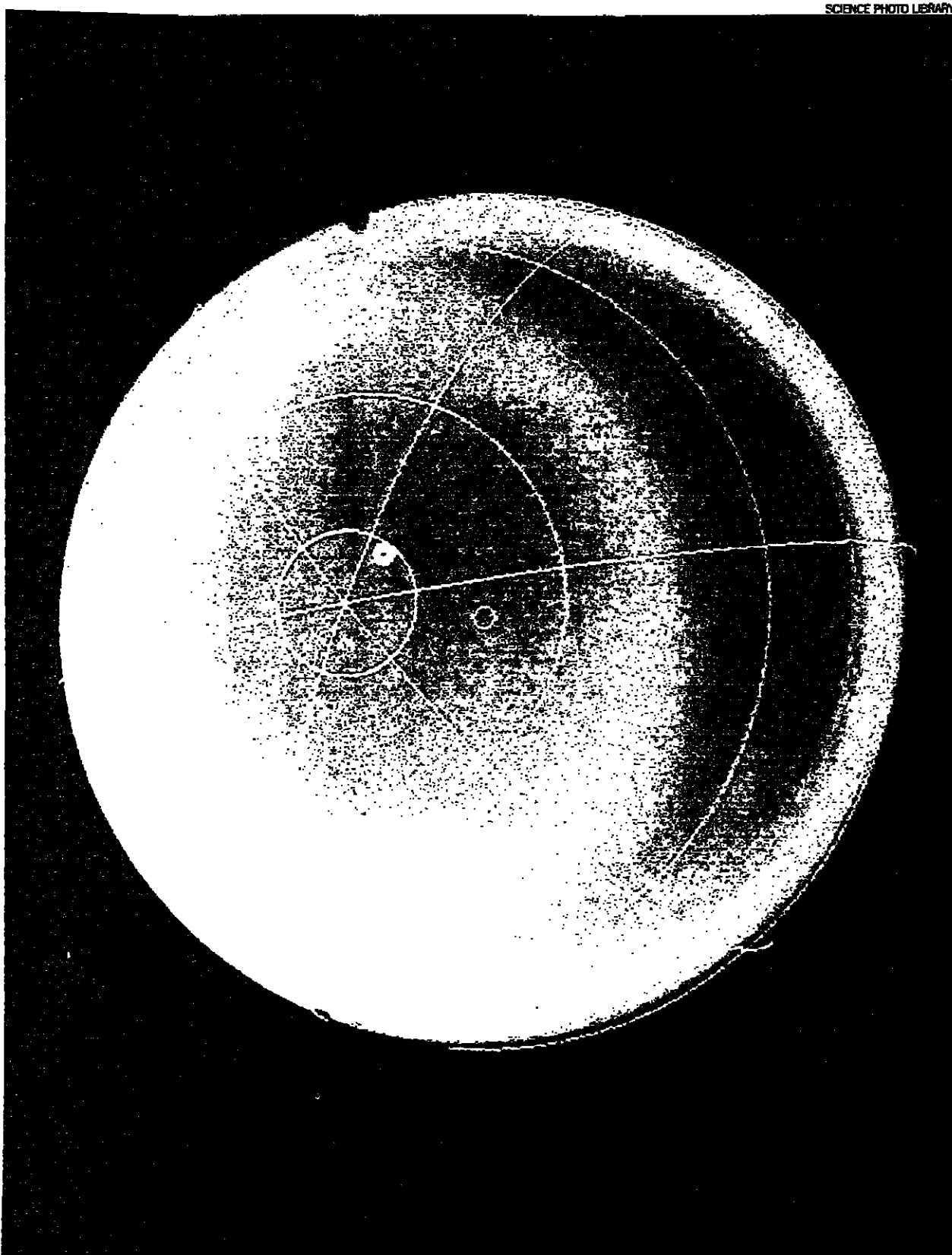
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The unluckiest stargazer of all



An image of Uranus, taken from the Voyager II space probe in 1986. Early astronomers believed the planet to be a star

The planet Uranus, a vast and trackless ball of gas in the outer reaches of the solar system, was discovered not once but 22 times. Credit is given to William Herschel, who, on March 13, 1781, was the first to realise that the object others had catalogued as a star was something else. He believed — quite wrongly, as it turned out — that it was a comet.

If an amateur astronomer from Manchester is right, the list of those who saw Uranus but failed to realise that it was anything out of the ordinary is about to get even longer. Kevin Kilburn, a materials manager for a Manchester plastics company, believes that Dr John Bevis, an 18th-century astronomer, may have spotted Uranus more than 40 years before Herschel.

To claim a planet is to grasp immortality. But before Herschel identified it, Uranus slipped through the fingers of John Flamsteed, who saw it six times, James Bradley (twice), Pierre Le Monnier (12 times) and Johann Tobias Mayer. All recorded it as nothing but a star.

Le Monnier's is the most inexplicable case, since he saw Uranus eight times in four weeks in December 1768 and January 1769. A planet, if seen more than once, ought to be easily distinguishable from a star because of its movement. But in poor Le Monnier's case, Uranus was near its stationary point when he made his observations.

John Bevis was a keen astronomer with an unlucky streak. He might now be remembered as the discoverer of a planet and the author of one of the finest star atlases of the 18th century, as well as the first man to identify the Crab Nebula. In fact he is forgotten. Mr Kilburn's rehabilitation of Bevis began one evening in November 1997, when he and two fellow members of the Manchester Astronomical Society, Tony Cross and Michael Oates, were examining a mysterious star atlas in the society's collection. It was old, but they had no idea what it was.

Research convinced them that what they had was a copy of Bevis's star atlas, *Uranographia Britannica*, which he compiled from his own obser-

Did a forgotten astronomer discover the planet Uranus? Nigel Hawkes reports

ations and from those of John Flamsteed and Edmund Halley. Valued at £25,000, it is one of fewer than 20 copies known to survive and one of the most complete versions anywhere.

Born in 1693, Bevis had studied medicine at Christ Church, Oxford, where Newton's *Opticks* was his inseparable companion, the *Dictionary of National Biography* records. He practised as a doctor in London but grew dissatisfied



The Constellation of the Great Bear, from Bevis's atlas

and, in 1738, moved to Stoke Newington, where he set up an observatory. Here he worked feverishly, often measuring the transit across the sky of 160 stars in a single night.

By 1745 he was ready to publish an exact view of the heavens in 52 large plates, containing more detail than any previous atlas. But shortly before publication, says Mr Kilburn, fate dealt Bevis a shocking blow. His publisher, John Neale, went bankrupt and the copper plates, ready for the printer, were sequestered by the Court of Chancery.

Bevis died in 1771. In 1785, his library came on to the market. It contained three proof copies of the atlas and a lot of loose, first-impression star charts, which were sold to an anonymous buyer and appeared on the market again the following year in bound form as the *Atlas Celeste*, with no credit to Bevis. It is a copy

of this "ghost book", as it became known, which was rediscovered last year in the cupboard at the Godlee Observatory in Manchester. The society has produced a version on CD-Rom at £13.99, which can be ordered online from its Web page, <http://www.u-net.com/ph/mas>.

The atlas shows that Bevis must have been the first to observe the Crab Nebula, later independently discovered by

logued by Messier as M22, in the constellation of Sagittarius. Bevis's observations were recorded in the ghost book and certainly hint that he may have recorded Uranus.

His plate, says Mr Kilburn, shows a triangle of stars to the right of M22. Such a triangle does not exist, although two of the stars can be identified as 24 and 25 Sagittarii. The third cannot be seen on modern star maps, yet the engraving shows all three as objects of similar size. The two known stars have magnitudes of 5.5 and 6.5, while Uranus in June 1738 would have been less than half a degree from the position of the third, non-existent star, and of magnitude 5.7.

Left of M22 is another star, which could be 26 Sagittarii but is shown as brighter than that star actually is. Could this be Uranus, which in May 1738 was very close by? Small errors in Bevis's recordings' position are possible, and the engraver of the plates made occasional errors, too.

So did Bevis discover Uranus? The case is plausible but unproved. The failure of *Uranographia Britannica* to be published was not, alas, the last of his disappointments. He was not, as he had hoped, appointed Astronomer Royal and so returned to medicine, but his passion for astronomy could not be quenched and it eventually killed him. On November 6, 1771, when observing the Sun's meridian altitude, he turned too quickly from telescope to clock and sustained a fall, from the effects of which he died.

He was, says the *Dictionary of National Biography*, "of a mild and benevolent disposition", his astronomical work distinguished more by diligence than by precision. He had less of one and a little more of the other, he might now be as famous as Herschel.



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THE TIMES

SCIENTISTS FOR THE NEW CENTURY

On Wednesday March 31, in *From Captain Hook to Robocop*, Dr Peter Kyberd, from Oxford Orthopaedic Engineering Centre, will discuss how close scientists have come to creating the perfect artificial hand. Are man-machine hybrids like Robocop near to reality, or are they destined to remain in the realms of fiction?

The talk will be introduced by Professor Susan Greenfield, the director of The Royal Institution. There will be the opportunity for questions from the audience.

The lecture, sponsored by Novartis, will be held at 7.30pm at The Royal Institution of Great Britain, 21 Albemarle Street, London W1X 4BS.

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The dangers of iodine deficiency

Human beings are extraordinarily dependent on iodine. For want of it, a child born as perfect as any other can descend into cretinism, physically deformed and mentally retarded. A more modest deficiency can cause goitre, the enlargement of the thyroid gland as it strives to function on inadequate iodine supplies.

Today Britain is free from iodine-deficiency diseases, though it has never been quite clear why. While many other countries introduced iodine into salt or bread on a compulsory basis, this was never done here. Iodised salt is available in Britain but its use has declined. Yet in the past half-century, and especially since 1960, goitre has disappeared.

The best explanation for this is milk. Since the 1960s milk has become the main source of iodine in the diet, followed by meat. The rise of milk as an iodine source is partly the result of iodine added to animal feed-

stuffs, and partly to luck. Cows milked in modern parlours have their udders and teats sterilised by iodine antiseptics, and some of this finds its way into the milk.

That meat and milk are the main sources of iodine could, however, be a problem to those who eat neither, as a study carried out in Germany and published in the *British Journal of Nutrition* shows. Vegans, in particular, could be at serious risk of iodine deficiency.

A team from the Research Institute of Child Nutrition in Dortmund, Germany, studied six adult volunteers on different diets. Dr Thomas Remer and colleagues report that even those on non-vegetarian diets had a low iodine intake, around 35-40 micrograms a day com-



SCIENCE BRIEFING
Nigel Hawkes

pared with the current recommendation in Germany of 200 micrograms a day. But the vegetarian volunteer was even lower — 16 micrograms a day. This particular person did not eat fish or seafood, a good source of iodine, but did drink milk. The German study ties in with work in Switzerland and New Zealand, showing declines in iodine intake, says Dr Lena Davidsson, of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in a commentary in the same issue of the journal. One reason may be the decline in salt consumption, driven by worries over its effects on blood pressure. Iodised salt remains an important source of iodine in many countries. Dr Alan Long, a vegetarian and nutritionist, says that

vegans, and those who do not drink milk, need to take the German study seriously. He is aware of at least one vegan in Britain who was found to be iodine-deficient and prescribed treatment before any damage was done. But he fears that there may be others.

In other parts of the world, iodine deficiency remains a serious problem. Even today it is estimated that in the developing world about 750 million people suffer from goitre, and 5.7 million from cretinism. Iodine can be bought in the form of pills, often derived from seaweed, but Dr Long complains that they are frequently badly labelled and give incorrect analyses of iodine content. Some years ago he persuaded the Ministry of Agriculture to commission analyses of 60 commercial supplements, which showed that many were inaccurately labelled. One contained ten times as much iodine as the label claimed, which would raise intakes to toxic levels.

Hot spots that can change a locust's brain

AN early exposure to high temperatures appears to have permanent effects on the brains of locusts, enabling them to fly in very hot conditions. Those raised in temperate climates and then transferred to a warm desert often have trouble flying, and some of them even die, says Dr Nino Ramirez, of the University of Chicago. But those that have been exposed to a brief blast at 45°C have no trouble.

Together with colleagues he investigated why, and they report in the *Journal of Physiology* that the heat shock has permanent effects. They exposed 40 locusts to temperatures of 45°C for three hours, gave them six to 24 hours to recover, and then compared slices of their brains — a very delicate operation, which nobody had done before — with those of locusts who had been kept at room temperature. Tools thinner than a human hair were needed.

They found that potassium outflow from the brain cells of the heat-shocked locusts was greatly reduced. Dr Ramirez suspects that this might reduce the sensitivity of the neurons responsible for movement, enabling the locusts to continue flying in extreme conditions.

Now he is turning his attention to mice to see if their brain cells can also adapt to extreme temperatures. Understanding the protection conferred by heat might ultimately be useful in protecting the brains of stroke patients, he believes.

Badger mystery



DESPITE legislation designed to protect it, the badger is still persecuted. As many as 9,000 badger sets are dug each year, in almost all cases illegally. Many others die on the roads. So it might be assumed that the best bet for a badger would be to choose to live in the most remote place it could find.

Not so, according to a study by two biologists from the Manchester Metropolitan University, published in the *Journal of Zoology*. They found that badgers do best if they

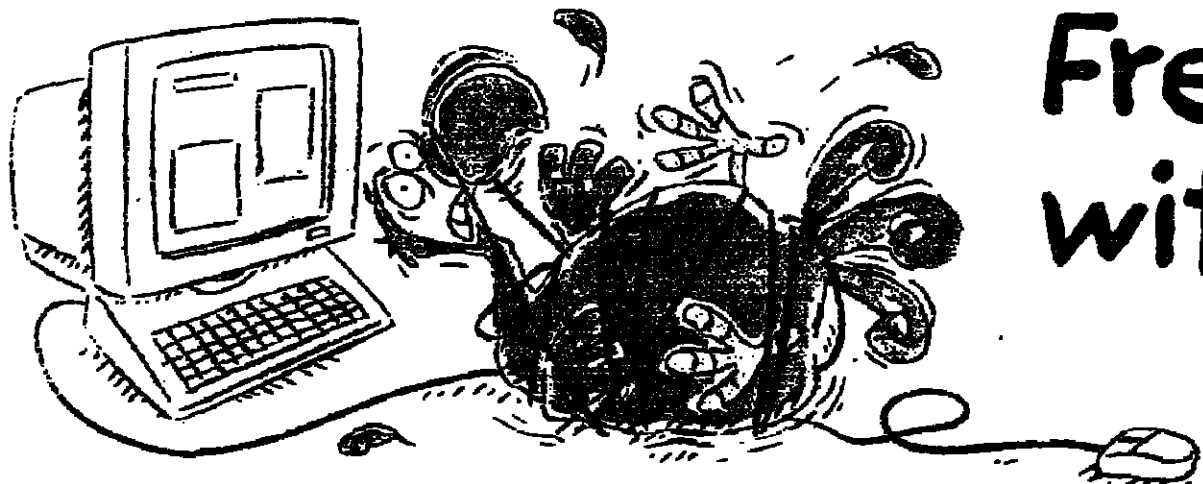
live in public places, in open country close to roads or public footpaths. The more points of public access, the better — presumably because people who would dig sets or set their dogs on badgers are less likely to do so if they risk being seen.

Paradoxically, the study also shows that badgers do better on the land of farmers opposed to badger conservation. Explaining this is a bit of a puzzle, but it is possible that such uncooperative landowners are as opposed to trespassers as they are to badgers. The researchers' conclusion is clear: "We suggest that existing public access may be benign or even beneficial in areas of high wilful persecution," they say.

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A far cry from Jean Machine



Over 50 Take a new

A far cry from Jean Machine

Despite his huge success, Tommy Hilfiger craves higher recognition. Interview by Lisa Armstrong



The Hilfiger look: the upscale designs for this summer

All American, a pictorial style tome by Tommy Hilfiger, is speckled with his convivial aperçus. On fashion conformists he says: "I was one." On English rock: "It's influenced me totally." On jeans: "They should look and feel faded and comfortable, and be somewhat irreverent, like you don't have a regular job and you don't care."

Hilfiger, one senses, wants to be liked, wants to be on first names with the world — witness the name of his hugely successful brand, Tommy.

Occasionally he's feared, but sometimes in hand-made suits from his favourite London tailors, Anderson & Sheppard, he stands astride a clothing empire about which, one imagines, he cares very much. Enough, at any rate, for the fashionistas' disinclination to regard him as a serious designer to rankle, even though he says that he has come to terms with "being someone who makes clothes that aren't outrageously expensive and sells to the young".

But, he concedes, he would like to be regarded as "an important American Designer". This seems unlikely, despite Red Label, a new upscale line of men's and women's clothes,

that he has hopes of seeing at the Oscars. If not, it will be in his store at New Bond Street, London — 16,000 sq ft of Tommy's World — which opened yesterday. He should worry. Tommy Hilfiger Inc turns over \$1.5 billion (£909 million) a year and is giving Ralph Lauren a run for his Polo shirts (the latter recently laid off 250 staff, one consequence, according to *The New York Times*, of Hilfiger's success).

Hilfiger, who owns a quarter of the company, is personally valued at around \$100 million (£62 million) — enough to finance his personal staff of 12; the 22-room clapboard Colefax & Fowlered farmhouse, in Greenwich, Connecticut, from where his helicopter journey into work every day takes 15 minutes; the spread in Mustique; and to see his four children, aged between three and 13, through private school.

His personal life is markedly sane. His wife, Susie, runs her own business selling traditional English-style children's clothes. Her nostalgic style is as far removed from Tommy Hilfiger merchandise as Milly Molly Mandy is from Tank Girl. These contradictions are one of the endearing aspects about Hilfiger. If the label is straightforward in its demo-



Tommy Hilfiger, the American designer, has a new store, Tommy's World, in New Bond Street, London

cratic, youthful American vision, the man is less clear-cut. The alliances with the more controversial personalities in showbusiness — from Mick Jagger and Michael Jackson to Hugh Grant and Snoop Doggy Dog — are only part of the story.

His offices, above Fifth Avenue, are accessorised with a couple of electric Gibson guitars ("Tommy likes to play," says his PR, "but not so you'd

like to hear."). But they are also furnished with WASPy sisal matting, weathered leather armchairs, and black and white framed photos.

His earliest ad bore the notorious legend: "The four great designers for men are ~~Kennel~~ ~~Calvin~~ ~~Tommy~~ ~~Hilfiger~~." For someone whose fashion expertise at that point comprised a stint as a sales assistant in Jean Machine on the King's Road, London, and a moderately successful jeans line that went into chapter 11, this was an enviable display of self-belief.

"Those ads were thought up by George Lois, who is a marketing genius. I was a little embarrassed at their tone in the beginning," he says, "but it would have taken years to get known without them."

The latest tactic, of developing an upmarket line to headline the existing ones, is the reverse of normal procedure, which creates an aspirational image before plunging into diffusion markets. But it might well work. Red Label is stuffed with wearable pieces any wannabe rock chick would love.

Born 46 years ago in Elmira, in New York State, Hilfiger was one of nine children of a Catholic watchmaker, and left school early ("They thought I was dyslexic"). He came to London and returned a year later to put his Jean Machine experience to some use.

"I found working there boring — it was just piles of blue jeans." With his last \$150 he bought 20 pairs of bell-bottoms and opened a boutique entitled People's Place. Five years later he had ten stores and a Porsche 911. By 1977 People's Place was in trouble. "I was hard on myself. I vowed never to fall into sloppy work habits again. Money, after a certain point," he says, "is not what drives me." So what does? "Fear of failure."

One imagines him being a no-nonsense father, although he says: "I'm trying hard not to be too hard on my kids." Certainly they are not paraded in public and didn't attend his fashion show in Manhattan last week. "They had homework and school the next day." Whatever one thinks of this bid for normality, there is one small chunk in Tommy World; while his three sons are happy to have their Dad's name across their chests, his daughter prefers the plainer stuff. "She's not crazy about logos, you see."

It's weird but it's new England

A new Kent estate is being marketed as a perfect English village. But Celia Brayfield is not convinced

Who would buy a house from a man who edges his driveway with begonias? Or from a woman named Sharon who wears a white hard hat instead of white high heels? The answer is supplied by a BBC documentary that captures Mondo Man and Mike Leigh Woman buying the houses of their dreams on the new estate at King's Hill, near Maidstone in Kent.

Let's get the language right. It's not a house, it's a home; the developer, Crest Homes, says so. And it's not an estate, it's a village; the super-developers, Rouse Kent Ltd, says so, and points to village features such as a village green and a village golf course. And she's not a Mike Leigh Woman, she calls herself a "millennial ruralist", and she's clear that "like most people who've grown up in towns and suburbs, I have a feeling that I'd like to be closer to the good things in rural life". But she doesn't want "that cockerel thing waking you up at 3am", and Sharon doesn't want any village-style mud in the show home because that would give buyers the message that Crest Homes doesn't care.

This is a subtle documentary, perhaps too subtle, but a dignified respite from the grotesque junk that now passes for factual TV. The film-makers spent a year recording the building, marketing, sale and occupation of 53 new homes in this ground-breaking, ah, village. We can make up our own minds about the saleswoman who explains how to push buyers into higher mortgages — "If they don't know what they can afford, try to steer them in the right direction."

The programme deserves to be archived because it records a piece of England in the process of defining itself. We, the English, are supposed to be having an identity crisis, but nobody has told them on King's Hill, where they're naming streets after the English apple varieties that don't grow in Kent any more.

The show-home designer knows how we see ourselves — school of House & Garden circa 1989, which means chintz-effect curtains with tie-backs, sloping ceilings in the bedrooms, fitted carpets, double doors. The architects were in no doubt ei-

ther, going for diamond-paned leaded-light windows and vernacular-style brickwork. "People like houses with a front door in the middle and four windows at the front, like children draw," says Sharon. She must be right. Crest Estates aims to sell its villages before they are built and the show home always goes first. They have to budget for the theft of everything pocket-sized in the building, presumably by people who don't know they can afford prices from £125,000 to just under £300,000.

King's Hill is the Utopia of the Nineties, the latest attempt at something we've been trying to get right all this century. Its 650-acre site was once West Malling airfield, and it is 15 miles from the M25, an hour from London and just more than two hours from Paris. Kent County Council, with a stiff quota of new homes to provide, brought in Rouse Kent, affiliates of an American real estate investment trust, who "master-planned" the site. In order of priority, its vision was of a business park employing 10,000 people, the golf course, 1,850 homes, schools, shops, a pub, a medical centre, the University of Greenwich, sports grounds and public art.

The masterplan included recycling the airfield concrete, replanting the wild orchids and replacing trees cut down. In 1996 Tony Blair visited to bless King's Hill, which he called "a fantastic development". Now, 550 homes and two public sculptures into the masterplan, it seems fantastic in many senses.

The people who moved in are youngish, upwardly mobile white families who are happy to sign covenants agreeing not to threaten property values by painting their front doors forbidden colours, or flaunting their dustbins.

This is not a village, it is an instant conurbation. Sharon's customers seem classless, cultureless and rootless, ready to mortgage their souls for a view of the golf course. King's Hill will shortly be declared a new parish, but there is no church. It's weird, but it is real and it may be the new England.

● Living Room, Modern Times. BBC2, Wednesday March 3, 9pm.

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CHANGING TIMES

John 6/150

The South is another country, and Faulkner the best guide

comment@the-times.co.uk



A vain premier and his closest
courtier are in a dangerous embrace

*Simon
Jenkins*

No article should need later exegesis. Last week I satirised Robin Cook's diplomacy by suggesting that Turkey's troubles with the Kurds might be next in line for his bomb-happy intervention. The irony of my argument was lost in a malicious translation, which has caused wide offence in Turkey. I strongly oppose interference in the affairs of sovereign states, especially where they concern separatist conflicts, as innumerable articles on this page will attest.

I must do better
I must do better
I must do better
I must do better
I must do better

DURING filming of *Shakespeare in Love*, Joseph Fiennes fell for Gwyneth Paltrow — dressed as a boy. “She made a lot of guys doubt their sexuality. I love that confusion of love.” I fear the admission is called *bad box office*.

That was Monday afternoon, just before I took the sheep out into the garden and tied its front legs to two pegs, leaving its back end free to swing about in the breeze. And, do you know, it was a total success: from 2pm to midnight, not a bird went near. But it is Tuesday morning, now, and, as you may just have guessed, the breeze went from strength to strength last night. I don't know what time the gale got up, I know only that it did not get up alone, which is why I have a blue-eyed sheep with an orifice in my acacia tree. Now do you understand why I can't call the fire brigade?

A cartoon illustration of a man in a polka-dot shirt standing at a blackboard. The blackboard has a list of five statements, each starting with 'I must':

- I must do better
- I must do better
- I must do better
- I must do better
- I must do better

The man is pointing at the blackboard with his right hand. A small table in the foreground has a sign that says 'LEAGUE TABLE'. A briefcase sits on the floor next to the table.

SIR JAMES SPICER has met his Churchillian hour of destiny. The ex-Tory MP plans to cap 40 years in politics — by standing for the local council. Sir Jimmy, 73, is to fight Beaminster: "I don't really want to, but I can't stand our Liberal council," he booms. "It will bang the drum for oldies."

■ **FASHION** god: Stephen Byers. The slick Trade and Industry Secretary has sashayed into London Fashion Week: "Shoes are my weakness," he tells me. "I wear trainers at weekends when I walk across the moor and I wear shorts when people might not see me. I like clothes, especially Armani, but," he adds mysteriously, "there is pressure to wear dark suits."

DURING filming of *Shakespeare in Love*, Joseph Fiennes fell for Gwyneth Paltrow — dressed as a boy. “She made a lot of guys doubt their sexuality. I love that confusion of love.” I fear the admission is called *bad box office*.



FIVE TESTS FOR EUROPE

From changeover to people's choice: *The Times* looks forward to what must change before any referendum

Yesterday in the Commons, the Prime Minister fired the starting gun for his attempt to take Britain into monetary union. In substance as well as style, this was no mere "change of gear" but the crossing of the Rubicon that Paddy Ashdown rushed to applaud. Tony Blair's desire to steer Britain into EMU is now clear. The euro, he says, is "a reality"; Britain must prepare to be part of it.

The amendments that he announced to this year's Finance and Social Security Bills require substantial public investment. They anticipate a victory in the national referendum which, the Government has promised, would follow a Cabinet decision to join. Britons are not to be asked their view before this money is spent, only afterwards. These amendments will authorise government departments to make their systems euro-compatible. The Government is thus planning on the basis that the single currency is here to stay, that it will be well managed and that Britain will be part of it. And Mr Blair has now given the lobbyists for EMU the signal they have long demanded, starting a process designed to convince voters that entry is a foregone conclusion.

Inevitability is one of the most seductive mantras of modern European politics. To go with the flow is the greatest desire of modern European politicians. To be left out of a seemingly inevitable European unification is almost the greatest fear of this consciously modern British Prime Minister.

Fortunately, Mr Blair has another fear, greater even than his fear of exclusion from the councils of those who have chosen EMU. He fears repudiation and defeat by the British electorate. He will not recommend to Britons that they give up their currency unless he is confident that the reply will be yes. Today that answer would be no.

Yesterday's statement is confirmation of his confidence that he can change public opinion. He will, however, follow the trend of that opinion with exquisite care. His decision on whether to ask voters to join will still depend on when and if he judges that the majority is so persuaded. Thus, in a decision based on the constant analysis of opinion polls, millions of Britons have a responsibility to think, and to choose. Those people and institutions best able to influence public opinion have the very greatest responsibility.

The *Times*, which is both a British newspaper and a European newspaper, is one of those institutions. For more than two centuries we have watched the successes and failures of continental countries to seek prosperity and harmony. We have had no monopoly of wisdom. But no newspaper has surpassed us for engagement in the issues which guide the islands of Britain in their dealings with the rest of the world.

We are not, and never have been, anti-Europeans, little-Englanders, blood-and-soil nationalists or shrinkers from the risks of the unknown. Those epithets already form the charge-sheet against all opponents of Britain adopting the euro; and in some cases the use of these words may be justified. The *Times*, however, is not persuaded of the economic merits of monetary union and takes the constitutional issues more seriously than the Prime Minister appears to.

As Europeans, as internationalists, as democrats and advocates of free trade in goods and ideas, we want to see a successfully modernising, dynamic Europe open to the world. The reforming agenda for Europe that Mr Blair set out yesterday is one that we would share. He believes that this is the direction that the eurozone is taking. But in the 11 countries of the eurozone, what we see is too much of the opposite. On the long referendum road, where their every move and mood will be observed by government pollsters, the British people should be acting as sharp observers themselves, looking at the eurozone to see if this is a system to which they want to lock their fate.

The Government's policy, as set out in October 1997 and given vastly greater political impetus by the Prime Minister yesterday, can be simply summarised. "In principle", it wants to join. The "constitutional issue" is a factor but "not an overriding one". Mr Blair set it aside even more clearly yesterday, saying that "it is right for Britain to overcome these political and constitutional arguments and the fears behind them". "The economic benefits must", however, "be clear and unambiguous". The Cabinet will recommend entry only if five economic tests are met. The "first and most critical" is the durable convergence of the UK business

cycle with that of the eurozone. The second is sufficient "flexibility" to adapt to a single currency regime. The Government accepts that "unemployment and inflexibility" are problems for eurozone countries, but the emphasis is on Britain's need to tackle its own "long-term unemployment, lack of skills and in some areas lack of competition". The third is the effect on inward investment to the UK. The fourth is the impact on the City's future as Europe's leading financial centre which the Government believes would be more secure within EMU. The fifth is the effect on British jobs.

These are practical markers, concentrating on technical questions such as asymmetric business cycles. The tests are narrow even in terms of the Government's insistence, reinforced by the Prime Minister yesterday, that the decision will be based exclusively on economic considerations. And they are tests for Britain to pass, not ways of

in line with its continental neighbours. A thriving monetary union would have a stable currency, a rate of growth as high or higher than its competitors and, after a decade of economic stagnation, a thriving jobs market in economies open to the world. For this scenario to be realised, and for unemployment to shrink at all, eurozone governments must first liberate their economies far more aggressively than they show signs of doing. Prospects that the euro will promote structural reforms in the eurozone of the kind we see as indispensable are currently slight. The trend, as we see it — and as Oskar Lafontaine and Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the German and French finance ministers driving the eurozone agenda, describe it — points the other way.

The euro-11 governments have demanded much sacrifice from their publics as they squeezed economies into conformity with the Maastricht criteria. Most have neglected supply-side reforms. These will now be politically tougher to put in place: voters have been told to expect a euro-dividend in jobs, not further painful adjustments and initial job losses. The eurozone is not an "optimal currency area" where labour moves freely between broadly compatible economies. Germany's overall labour costs are four times those in Portugal and more than a third higher than Italy's — and Britain's. Low-cost, high-unemployment countries such as Spain will have every incentive to make the most of these cost differentials.

There will therefore be a temptation, to which Germany and France are already succumbing, to demand tax, social security and wage harmonisation to protect them against "social dumping". This will be severely counter-productive. If Britain were to join monetary union, the risk is that, far from increasing its influence for change, membership would put Britain under irresistible pressure to dismantle this country's hard-won reforms of the past two decades.

A further cause for concern is the eurozone's design faults, notably the insulation of the European Central Bank from political accountability and its exclusive concern with price stability. These increase the risks that a one-size-fits-all monetary policy will be needlessly deflationary.

"Convergence" with stagnant, unreformed economies would be an historic error. So far, Britain and its European partners seem to us to be marching to the sound of different drums. We prefer the British beat, not for narrow nationalist reasons but because it strikes a more distinctively modern note. We see no gain in being yoked to economic creeds outworn, nor do we think that this would benefit the EU any more than it would benefit Britain.

We would, finally, need to be persuaded on the constitutional issues which, whatever Mr Blair affects to believe, have not been resolved. The importance to democracy of political accountability cannot lightly be dismissed. The EU's democratic deficit, wide enough already, gaps wider still under monetary union.

British politicians, though not British voters, have always been reluctant to acknowledge the political dimensions of the EU. Their continental partners, more realistic, believe that this democratic deficit will be bridged only by a pan-European government. The single currency, as many of them now openly say, requires one.

But such a government of all Europe is not inevitable — particularly if Britain stays out of the eurozone. We see the possibility of a far safer and healthier alternative, one that will keep government close to the governed and be more compatible with an enlarged Union.

Britain's membership of the EU is a settled fact. Outside or inside EMU, it will have powerful political influence. It should use this influence to encourage the EU to work with the grain of Europe's immense diversity. Only thus can the experiment of European Union be compatible with the pull of national loyalties. The cause of European integration is not best served by the notion that all countries must march in lock-step. For historical reasons, some EU countries genuinely desire political integration. They should be able to go ahead, provided that nations not sharing that desire do not have to join them.

Flexibility is the key to harmony and prosperity in Europe. That is the strategic prize which every British voter should keep in mind when an inflexible future is being represented, increasingly and ever more shrilly represented, as an inevitable one.

THE FIVE TESTS

Before serious debate can begin about the balance between EMU's economic advantages and constitutional costs, the eurozone needs to undergo substantial economic and political change.

● The "European social model" with its low growth, high taxes and huge unemployment must give way to one that is more dynamic and competitive. Signs of this will be dramatically reduced state intervention, elimination of subsidies, reform of welfare disincentives and unfunded pensions systems and much smaller public payrolls. Government spending, adjusted for accelerated privatisation, must be cut to 45 per cent or less of GDP, enabling steep cuts in taxation.

● Flexible labour markets must show consistently high levels of employment. That will require visible reform of restrictive labour laws and other non-competitive practices, sharply reduced non-wage labour costs and open markets in government procurement. A key part of this test will be a steep and sustainable fall in eurozone unemployment, currently averaging 10.8 per cent, to around British levels, with strong private sector growth in jobs.

● The single currency must be a manifest and sustained success. It must work smoothly to the benefit of all its members and command popular support. To avoid social unrest, a rise in nationalism or a political backlash against the EU itself, the gains must be seen by a clear majority of Europe's voters to outweigh the pain of economic adjustment and the diminution of democratic controls. The eurozone must begin to demonstrate that it can ride out recessions and shocks that affect some member states more than others: by the expected referendum date of 2002, this vital criterion is unlikely to be measurable by any solid objective test.

● The constitution of the European Central Bank must be radically reformed. The ECB is now the most powerful public institution in Europe but it is not responsible to any elected body. It operates in secret, refuses to disclose its voting records, sets its own targets and acts as judge and jury of its own performance. Its officials cannot be dismissed, disciplined or censured by any government or elected body. The ECB's objectives must be revised, to charge it with avoiding deflation as well as inflation. Its adversarial relationship with Europe's elected governments, already causing major political clashes in Europe, must be clarified. Making the ECB's constitution compatible with democracy and economic reality will require amendments to the Maastricht treaty.

● Monetary union must prove workable without a drive to European political union. Key parts of this test will be the retention of national sovereignty in fiscal policies, including corporate taxation and taxes on savings, with the veto preserved and no extension of collective decision-making in this domain. The drive to harmonise or "co-ordinate" national laws, whether directly in EU councils or indirectly, through recourse by the Commission to social chapter, health and safety or single market provisions, must be halted. Both politically and economically, the eurozone must be outward-looking; monetary union must not be an obstacle to EU enlargement.

measuring what would make the eurozone irresistibly attractive.

We believe that tests are needed on the other side too. Tests that the single currency area must pass before debate can be joined about whether it could conceivably make sense for Britain to be part of it. These tests must be met before the Government should even consider putting membership to a referendum.

To list them indicates the distance to be travelled. Much of Europe still awaits its modernising revolution. In terms of labour costs, welfare bills, bankrupt pension funds, state subsidies and government spending, taxation and unemployment, the eurozone needs to change in fundamental ways. When these changes have been clearly seen to happen, Europe will indeed be "going British way", making possible a rational assessment of the "success" of the single currency and a properly based debate on whether this country should take an irreversible step to stay

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Prospects for the police after accusation of racism

From the Chairman of the Police Federation of England and Wales

Sir, I am confident that all police officers will recognise the gravity of the issues dealt with in the Macpherson report (details, February 22 and 23). This organisation speaks on behalf of all officers in England and Wales below the rank of superintendent.

The overwhelming majority of those officers have feelings of deep sadness and regret over the events surrounding the murder of Stephen Lawrence. There has been a tragic miscarriage of justice, due almost entirely to the mistakes made during the murder investigation. In their dealings with the Lawrence family, some officers may have been insensitive. But there can be no justification for a blanket allegation that the police did not care about this murder because the victim was black.

I have no wish to understate the real problems of racism in the police service. However, I cannot accept that the report is right to conclude that the Metropolitan Police (or any other police force in Britain) is riven by "pernicious and institutionalised racism". Sir William Macpherson of Cluny defines this as "the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin". Collective implies that responsibility for this failure applies across the board.

This is grossly unfair. It ignores the work put in day after day by the great majority of police officers who strive to uphold their oath of office, to act without fear or favour towards all members of the community. If there are failings in policies and operational strategies, they are faults of leadership and management among those who take these decisions, be they legislators or chief officers.

The Police Federation accepts that the story of training police officers in race relations is one of good intentions overridden by operational priorities and inadequate resources.

In spite of several working parties and reports that have identified the problems and laid down principles and training programmes, there has been a massive failure to implement agreed criteria.

The self-confidence of the police has been seriously undermined and unless it is restored, and quickly, the long-term consequences for police and the public could be very damaging. Perhaps now the Home Secretary, all chief officers and police authorities will act.

Yours faithfully,
FRED BROUGHTON,
Chairman,
Police Federation of
England and Wales,
15-17 Langley Road,
Sutton, Surrey KT6 6LP,
February 23.

From Mr Lawrence T. Roach

Sir, The anti-racist credentials of Sir Paul Condon are beyond dispute. His Metropolitan Police service has a highly creditable record of efforts to eradicate racism from its ranks. Changing such deep-rooted attitudes is normally the work of generations.

To condemn him and his officers now for failing to transform the Metropolitan Police in the relatively short time he has had in his post is surely both ill-considered and unjust.

Yours faithfully,
LAWRENCE T. ROACH,
43 Ripon Way,
Borehamwood,
Hertfordshire WD6 2HY,
February 23.

From Mr Simon Hughes, MP for North Southwark and Bermondsey (Liberal Democrat)

Sir, No effort must be spared to eliminate racism from all our public services but, above all, our police. We must be vigilant, however, not to turn accountability into scapegoating leading article, February 23.

Sir Paul Condon took over the Metropolitan Police a matter of weeks before Stephen Lawrence was killed. If it was racist at that time, the fault must lie chiefly with his predecessors. Since 1993, however much there is to do, things have significantly improved.

Fingers should not be pointed at successive Metropolitan Police Commissioners without being pointed also at the Metropolitan Police authorities — namely the Home Secretaries. If the last Government had transferred responsibility for the Metropolitan Police away from the Home Office to people directly accountable to Londoners (as Liberal Democrats have always argued and this Government is now doing), racism in the police service would almost certainly have been tackled much more quickly.

The most constructive way forward from this week should entail the most determined effort to recruit black and Asian graduates to our public services, in particular to the police, and a much greater commitment to providing the police with the resources for the personnel and the technology they need to investigate crime in London.

Yours sincerely,
SIMON HUGHES
(Liberal Democrat)
London Spokesman,
House of Commons,
February 23.

'Kneejerk' injunction on press

From the Director of the Guild of Editors

Sir, It is little wonder that editors who are usually in fierce competition were united in their condemnation of the Home Secretary's injunction against *The Sunday Telegraph* (reports, February 22).

For years Labour has promised a Freedom of Information Act. After the 1997 election its pledges were strengthened. Such an Act was described as a cornerstone of constitutional reform by Mr Straw to be believed to be in favour of watering down its provisions, particularly with regard to the police (report, January 12).

The media still face threats from the Human Rights Act; organisations are hiding behind the new Data Protection Act, and the Youth Justice Bill could mean a generation vanishing from newspaper pages and TV screens. Mr Straw's injunction was a kneejerk reaction in the direction of secrecy when he should be leaning towards greater openness. So much for fine words.

Yours sincerely,
BOB SATCHWELL,
Director, Guild of Editors,
University Centre, Granta Place,
Mill Lane, Cambridge CB2 1RU,
February 22.

From Dr Kenneth MacRAE

Sir, In whose interests was it for *The Sunday Telegraph* to attempt to publish excerpts from Sir William Macpherson's inquiry on Sunday when the report of the inquiry is to be published in full on Wednesday, once the interested parties, the Lawrence family and the Metropolitan Police have had an opportunity to read it in its entirety? *The Sunday Telegraph's* course.

This, alas, is yet another example of the press acting in its own selfish commercial interest, behaving more as part of the entertainment industry than a responsible guardian of the public interest. The almost universal support for *The Sunday Telegraph's* actions elsewhere in the press clearly suggest that the interests of those affected by this inquiry are regarded as secondary to increased sales of newspapers.

A free press is a fundamental part of a free society, and it is sad to see such irresponsible behaviour by one newspaper being supported by so many others.

Yours faithfully,
KENNETH MACRAE,
5 Northcroft Terrace, W13 9SP,
February 22.

White Paper waffle

From Field Marshal Lord Carver

Sir, I have now read the Government's White Paper, *Modernising Parliament: Reforming the House of Lords*. I cannot recall ever having read a paper which repeated itself so often and said so little in so many words.

I suggest that some literary or educational establishment should offer a prize for a version which says all that is essential to the paper in the shortest span.

The Stationery Office should then cost it in comparison with the 51 pages of the White Paper's glossy waffle for which they charge £8.20.

Yours truly,
CARVER,
House of Lords,
February 19.

Still fizzing

From Mr Barry Hyman

Sir, Contrary to your Weekend item, "The drinks that time forgot — Soda-stream" (February 20), mine is still going strong. I won it from the maker in a slogan competition a decade ago, and it replaced the one I had acquired at a jumble sale. In the summer there is nothing better than a personally over-fizzed, bright-green, ice-cold "Bertie" (sugar-free regrettably) Limeade concentrate.

Genetically unmodified and free from BSE, CJD, listeria, E.coli and salmonella, my Soda-stream still has its old spot in our new kitchen.

Yours etc,
BARRY HYMAN,
4 Priory View, Bushey Heath,
Hertfordshire WD23 3QZ,
February 20.

Return of the Marbles

From Mr G. A. Lemos

Sir, I applaud Mr Michael Goldman's suggestion (letter, February 20) that high-quality facsimiles of the Elgin Marbles should be juxtaposed with the originals and the Greeks invited to select between them, from a distance of five metres. However, I propose that Greek schoolchildren should make the choice, rather than "senior representatives of the Greek Government".

The pieces chosen should then be exhibited at the British School of Archaeology in Athens, as a deserved tribute to the scholars who have contributed so much to the Greek sense of cultural identity. It would only remain for copies to be made of the pieces still in Athens and for the

trustees of the British Museum to choose between them.

Thus you would get truly "cultural" Olympics, in 2004, in which I would place my drachmas (or euros by then) on the Greek schoolchildren.

Yours truly,
G. A. LEMOS,
(Member, British Greek Cultural Friendship Association),
8 Orchard Court,
Portman Square, W1H 9PA,
marbles@parthenon.demon.co.uk

From Mr David Townley

Sir, Mr Alf Lomas, MEP (letter, February 20), who suggests that your leading article of February 19 contained the "usual hoary old nationalist arguments", is guilty of calling the kettle black.

What is the Greek demand for the return of the Elgin Marbles other than nationalism? As an enthusiastic supporter of the European state, Greece should be indifferent to where in Europe her treasures rest.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID TOWNLEY,
92 Fir Tree Road,
Banstead, Surrey SM7 1NQ,
February 20.

Jenkins and Turkey

From Mr Altunur Kilic

Sir, As a long-time reader of *The Times* and of Mr Simon Jenkins, I am aware of his rather biting and sarcastic style and sense of humour.

I therefore can discern that the main target of his column on February 19 was Mr Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, and not Turkey and the Turkish people. But please realise that many of my sensitive compatriots will take his article of February 19, "The Kurd instinct", as an attack on Turks and Turkey (see also letter, February 22).

It is all right for Mr Jenkins to attack Western hypocrisy over Kosovo, but he is ill-advised to do so in relation to Turkey at a very sensitive time for our country, even though the same hypocrisy is being shown towards the Kurdish problem after the capture of a terrorist who has the blood of more than 30,000 Turks and Kurds on his hands.

Yours sincerely,
ALTUNUR KILIC
(Columnist, *Türkiye*),
Dogru Muvakkit Sokak,
No 23 Emirgan,
Istanbul 80850,
February 22.

Arsenal's 'fair play'

From Mr Clive Hughes

Sir, Mr Simon Carne (letter, February 17) is incorrect in stating that a referee may not stop a game for unsporting behaviour.

Law 12 of the *Laws of the Game* states that "a player is cautioned and shown the yellow card if... he is guilty of unsporting behaviour". The same law also explains that an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any offence where play is stopped to caution a player.

There was no need, therefore, for the referee of the February 13 match between Arsenal and Sheffield United to have waited until the ball was out of play, in the net before stopping the game.

If he had acted immediately then the debate regarding "fair play" need never have started.

Yours faithfully,
CLIVE HUGHES,
57 Blain Cwm,
Llandudno,
Conwy LL30 1LE,
clivehughes@arsenal.fc.net
February 17.

A victory for rugby

From Mr John Willcox-Jones

Sir, The Scots now believe they should have beaten the English, although the English do not think they beat the Scots well enough.

The Welsh nearly beat the Irish, who feel they should also have beaten the French (reports, Sport, February 22). Meanwhile the French just smile — at least for a few more weekends.

Raw nationalism prevails with millions following the battles. There are many more heads the following day, but nobody gets killed — the beauty of the Five Nations is, thank goodness, well and truly with us again.

Now bring on the Italians!

Yours faithfully,
JOHN WILLCOX-JONES,
La Haye,
Reading Road, Cholsey,
Oxfordshire OX10 9HG,
01235 360100@compuserve.com
February 21.

John G. 150

Paris pays tribute to Hockney

Arts, page 38

BUSINESS • PROPERTY • ARTS • SPORT • TELEVISION

THE TIMES

Act of pure irony

Arts, page 37

BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 24 1999

George fears conflict if Bank is forced to converge rates

By ALASDAIR MURRAY
ECONOMICS
CORRESPONDENT

EDDIE GEORGE, the Governor of the Bank of England, yesterday warned the Government that there was "potential for conflict" if it forced the Bank of England to converge British and European interest rates in preparation for membership of EMU.

Mr George also told the Treasury Select Committee that there are still considerable risks to the health of the global economy with the "extraordinary buoyancy" of the US economy in particular vulnerable to a substantial slowdown.

However, the Governor rejected a claim from DeAnne Julius, an independent member of the Monetary Policy Committee who was also appearing before the committee, that the Bank may have made a mistake in raising rates during the first part of last year. He claimed that the Bank's sudden shift in policy last autumn was driven by a "pretty dramatic" deterioration abroad.



Eddie George at the committee yesterday

Mr George's comments were later echoed by Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Federal Reserve, who gave warning that although the US economy was performing "admirably" a tightening labour market and financial turmoil abroad posed big risks to US growth.

Dr Greenspan questioned whether US shares were overvalued. International stock markets, however, largely shrugged off Dr Greenspan's comments with the Dow Jones industrial average in New York holding

firm after Monday's 200-point gain. In London, the FTSE 100 recorded its second-highest closing level to date, climbing 85.3 points to 6,155.2. French and German markets also made substantial gains.

Mr George, who was speaking ahead of the publication of the Government's National Changeover Plan, left MPs in no doubt that the Government still faces formidable obstacles to joining the euro. He insisted that the Bank could find it difficult to continue to meet the Govern-

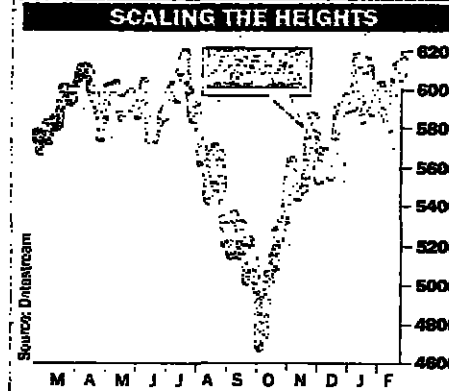
ment's inflation target if it was also obliged to reduce interest rates towards European levels. "I would think the potential for conflict was quite high," Mr George said. Although the Bank of England has made substantial cuts in interest rates in the past few months, British rates still stand at 5.5 per cent, compared with just 3 per cent in the eurozone.

The Governor said the Bank had no plans in place for a changeover to the euro and there was "not a shred of

truth" in claims that the Bank is already trying to reduce rates to European levels. "If the Government has that objective they have not told me," Mr George said.

However, he admitted that the fact that both the Bank and the European Central Bank are pursuing policies for stable inflation should "in time bring a measure of convergence."

He said switching from the current target measure of inflation to the differently calculated European measure could



prove "intensely damaging" to the credibility of the Bank's battle against rising prices. British inflation calculated using the European measure, which does not include items such as owner-occupied housing, stands at just 1.6 per cent compared with 2.6 per cent for the target measure and 2.4 per cent for overall inflation. Commentary, page 27

LINKS

WEBSITE: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk

NatWest breaks through the £2bn barrier

By CAROLINE MERRELL
BANKING CORRESPONDENT

NATWEST brought further cheer to the upbeat British banking sector yesterday when it reported profits that broke through the £2 billion level for the first time.

Pre-tax profits for 1998 exceeded City expectations, reaching £2.1 billion against £1.75 billion for 1997, although those figures had been reduced by £706 million of losses from NatWest Markets, its former investment banking arm.

Even then the 1998 figures were dented by a £100 million provision for pensions mis-selling, relating to the second stage of the mis-selling review.

Bad debt provisions in emerging markets fell by 27 per cent, reaching £2.3 billion. Derek Wanless, chief executive, said: "We have reduced our exposure to counterparties and customers in emerging countries over the past year. We have taken £86 million of additional specific provisions in respect of customer and bank loans in Asia and Russia."

Mr Wanless did admit that the banking group's restructuring plan, which included shedding 10,000 jobs, has fallen behind schedule.

Instead of completion by next year as was planned, the restructuring will not be completed until 2001. He emphasised that the bank was continuing to bring down costs. He said: "NatWest's costs in 2000 will be lower than in 1997."

On possible acquisitions, Mr Wanless said that at present the bank preferred to concentrate on developing its own businesses.

"There are plans in place around the group in terms of each of the individual businesses to improve efficiency and effectiveness," he said. "We have not seen anything that in our view is value from a shareholder point of view," he added.

The group proposed a final dividend of 24.2p, giving a total dividend of 30p, up 11.8 per cent on the previous year. The shares reacted positively climbing 45p to £13.19.

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Single currency would put unconverted in a spin
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STOCK MARKETS		
FTSE 100	6155.2	(+85.3)
Nikkei	14500.85	(+242.41)
Dax	1275.14	(+3.00)
Hang Seng	8508.41	(+15.73)
S&P Composite	1275.14	(+3.00)

US RATE		
Federal Funds	4.75%	(+0.00)
Long bond	5.75%	(+0.00)
Yield	5.42%	(+0.00)

LONDON MONEY		
3-month interest rate	5.75%	(+0.00)
6-month interest rate	5.75%	(+0.00)
12-month interest rate	5.75%	(+0.00)

STERLING		
New York	1.5140	(+0.0028)
London	1.5113	(+0.0027)
Paris	1.4874	(+0.0077)
Frankfurt	1.4831	(+0.0077)
Yen	128.29	(+0.0028)
S index	101.8	(+0.01)

DOLLAR		
London	1.0894	(+0.0027)
Paris	1.4874	(+0.0077)
Frankfurt	1.4831	(+0.0077)
Yen	128.29	(+0.0028)
S index	101.8	(+0.01)

NORTH SEA OIL		
Brent 15-day (May)	\$11.05	(+0.10)

GOLD		
London close	\$287.45	(+0.25)

* denotes midday trading prices
Exchange rates Page 28

Unilever to give 'no use' £5bn to shareholders

By CARL MORTIMER, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDITOR

UNILEVER, the Anglo-Dutch food and soap company, launched the largest cash return to shareholders yesterday in the form of a £5 billion special dividend. Niall FitzGerald, Unilever's chief executive, admitted that the company had no use for the cash which amounts to 10 per cent of the total market value of the company.

The payout, which amounts to 66.13p per share, is almost equal to the £4.7 billion proceeds of the sale to ICI of the

and we have looked very carefully at target companies. We believe that the values attached to many businesses are excessive. It is not sustainable."

Unilever's mammoth cash handout came as the company revealed a pre-tax profit, at constant exchange rates and excluding disposals, of £3.3 billion, an increase of 41 per cent over 1997. Operating margins rose into double digits and the total ordinary dividend is increased by 27 per to 10.7p.

The company managed just 1 per cent sales growth in Europe due to the cool summer which hurt ice-cream sales but the company has restored Persil to lead position in the UK thanks to the success of its new laundry tablet. Unilever's US profits gained 14 per cent with strong growth in food and personal care products but the Asian crisis forced the company to sacrifice growth to protect margins and market shares.

Unilever's cash distribution will be closely scrutinised by other companies, including Royal Dutch/Shell which has struggled to find a tax-efficient mechanism for returning capital to shareholders. Under Dutch law, taxpaying shareholders could suffer a levy of up to 60 per cent on a cash handout.

Unilever's novel solution is the issue of a preference share to Dutch taxpaying investors which will have a five-year life. However, the decision not to do a share buyback could penalise US investors who account for more than 20 per cent of Unilever. Under US rules any capital payment other than a buyback is treated as income and is therefore taxable.

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Tempus, page 28



Niall FitzGerald promised to distribute proceeds of the sale of its specialty business to investors

Singh makes £22m with Attitude

By FRASER NELSON

REUBEN SINGH, the 22-year-old businessman who founded the Miss Attitude retail chain, has sold out for an estimated £22 million. He has sold to Gary Klesch, the venture fund investor who took over the Knickerbox chain in January last year and now intends to merge the two companies.

Mr Singh, who is said to be worth £50 million, said he intends to use the money to set up his own venture capital fund which will buy media companies. He said: "I've done retail. I've been there, seen that, got the T-shirt. Now it's time for media — and if anyone has any offers, I'm here."

He opened Miss Attitude in Manchester's Arndale Centre while he was studying for his A-levels four years ago. It now has 40 outlets in the UK, and last made a profit of £1.5 million.

The exact value of the deal has not been disclosed, but Mr Singh said he "would not have picked up the phone" to Mr Klesch if he had offered the £8 million price tag City analysts were suggesting.

Mr Singh is a director of six other companies, and runs most of them with his 20-year-old brother Bobby. Mr Klesch runs Klesch Capital Partners, which buys distressed companies cheaply and restores them to financial health. He has bought Miss Attitude to help to turn round Knickerbox.

BSkyB opens talks with Canal

By RAYMOND SNOODY
MEDIA EDITOR

BSKYB, the satellite television group, has opened exploratory talks with Canal Plus, Europe's largest subscription television company.

While talks are believed to be at an early stage, looking at a wide range of options, they are understood potentially to include a full £14 billion merger

of the two companies. Together, the two groups would be the dominant pay-TV player in Europe in terms of scale although they do not compete directly in any market.

BSkyB, in which News International, the owner of The Times, has a 40 per cent stake, is based wholly in the UK and Republic of Ireland. Previous attempts to break into continental Europe, particularly in

Germany, have come to nothing. Yesterday BSKYB shares rose by 3.5 per cent to close at 536p, up 18p.

BSkyB declined to comment last night but Canal Plus, which has a total of 11 million subscribers in Europe, acknowledged that there had been talks. Any merger would inevitably attract close scrutiny from Brussels. Competition Commissioner Karel

van Miert has taken a particular interest in issues of dominance in new media.

A merger would also involve football and sports rights issues. BSKYB has made a recommended £563 million offer for Manchester United, which is being investigated by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Canal Plus owns a top French club, Paris St Germain.

Internet share frenzy fails to interest Gates

FROM OLIVER AUGUST
IN NEW YORK

BILL GATES, the world's richest man, invests none of his money in Internet stocks and instead sticks to much safer government and corporate bonds.

The Microsoft founder, who is worth close to \$100 billion (£62 billion) owns \$10 billion in bonds and only \$500 million in shares. Another \$1 billion of his vast fortune is invest-

ed in private ventures such as property deals.

The biggest part of his wealth is still tied up at his software company. He owns a 20 per cent stake in the \$400 billion business. But for several years Mr Gates has been selling Microsoft shares to diversify his investments.

The fund manager he picked to carry out his investing is Michael Larson, a complete unknown until now. Mr Larson, 39, has complete discre-

tion over Mr Gates's fortune, making him possibly the single most powerful investor on Wall Street.

There are only two hedge funds that are bigger in America, Soros and Tiger Management, both of which employ hundreds of people. Mr Larson was hand-picked by Mr Gates after a careful interview process during which Mr Gates checked each one of Mr Larson's 13 references.

His title is chief investment officer of a company called BGI — Bill Gates Investments. Mr Gates and Mr Larson hold meetings every six weeks and discuss investment ideas and market conditions by e-mail.

The Microsoft founder does not interfere directly with Mr Larson's decisions or the timing of his buying and selling.

Last year the fund manager justified his position as banker to the world's richest man by outperforming the Dow Jones industrial average rise of 17 per cent.

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In his first ever interview, he told Fortune magazine about a number of his investments.

He holds short-term government bonds as well as some junk bonds and emerging market debt. In the equity part of the portfolio he holds telecommunications companies Liberty Media, TCI, Cox and USA Networks.

He also owns a stake in Berkshire Hathaway, the investment company of Warren Buffett, a friend of Mr Gates.

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Warning on profit hits OAI

Shares in Oxford Asymmetry International (OAI) fell more than 10 per cent as the fast-growing supplier of chemicals to the pharmaceutical industry warned investors that it expects flat profits this year.

OAI shares fell back to 499p from 558p yesterday. Sales, up 47 per cent to £14.9 million last year, are increasing rapidly, but the company is experiencing a number of growing pains.

Merant decline

Merant, the software solutions company, reported net profit at \$5.2 million (£3.2 million) for the three months to January 31 (\$10.8 million). The shares rose 5p to 146p. Revenues were \$95.7 million (\$100.9 million). Earnings per share were 4 cents (7 cents).

Pearson

We have been asked to point out that the Exel business that Pearson has sold to Primark for £19 million does not include Ex-share, which generates about 75 per cent of revenues of the Exel business Pearson acquired in 1994.

EXCHANGE RATES

	Bank	Bank
	Buy	Sell
Australia \$	21.23	21.45
Austria Sch	13.76	13.85
Belgium Fr	66.51	67.29
Canada C\$	71.23	71.55
Cyprus Cyp £	0.8951	0.9236
Denmark Kr	11.52	11.63
Spain Ptas	166.64	167.10
France Fr	6.55	6.56
Germany DM	3.039	2.977
Greece Dr	340.75	342.00
Hong Kong \$	7.75	7.75
India Rupee	47.50	47.50
Indonesia Rp	1,700	1,700
Italy Lit	1,376	1,376
Japan Yen	109.00	109.00
Malta Mils	0.669	0.669
Netherlands Gld	3.431	3.431
New Zealand \$	3.14	2.90
Norway Kr	13.33	12.39
Portugal Esc	207.34	205.11
S Africa Rand	10.68	9.72
Spain Ptas	256.15	257.36
Sweden Kr	13.88	12.73
Switzerland Fr	2.495	2.281
Taiwan Nts	36.923	37.008
USA \$	1.719	1.576

Rates for small denomination banknotes only as supplied by Barclays Bank. Different rates apply to traveller's cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

Wimpey sets strong growth targets as profit rises 35%

By ROBERT COLE
CITY CORRESPONDENT

GEORGE WIMPEY, the housebuilder, has set itself ambitious targets to lift UK revenues by 50 per cent over the next five years and to double US revenues.

The targets were set out as Wimpey reported a 35 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £85 million in 1998 (£63.1 million).

Yesterday's results were the last to be delivered by Joe Dwyer, Wimpey's long-serving chairman. Executive con-

trol of the group is passing to Dennis Brant, chief executive. He said he wanted to see the operating profit margins in one of its two UK housing companies — called Wimpey Homes — rise from 7.8 per cent to at least 10 per cent in two years. Last year margins in that segment widened 16 per cent to 6.7 per cent.

Wimpey's second UK division, McLean Homes, already has operating profit margins of 11.4 per cent. Mr Brant said he wanted to maintain these margins. Wimpey is also pre-

paring to extend its US operations, which trades as Morrison Homes, by opening three new sales offices in Florida.

Helped by the release of US tax losses from previous years, Wimpey's earnings grew 46 per cent to 17.6p a share in the year just ended. The final dividend is 3.9p, making 6p for the year (5.7p). The shares rose 2 1/2p to 133p yesterday.

Beazer, a rival housebuilder, also unveiled financial results yesterday. But in stark contrast to the strength shown by Wimpey, Beazer reported a

15 per cent decline in profits, blaming delays in several planning applications for the fall.

Beazer earned £26.6 million in the six months to December 31 (£31.4 million). The planning delays meant Beazer had fewer completed properties available for sale. It also increased the amount of money Beazer had tied up in working capital.

However, Dennis Webb, chief executive, insisted that the planning problems had only delayed building work and left the company in better shape for the future.

Both Wimpey and Beazer reported that their average selling prices increased, but attributed the rises to a change in the mix of properties sold, rather than because of any substantial growth in comparable selling prices. Both firms are selling more bigger houses.

Earnings at Beazer declined 16 per cent to 6.7p a share. The interim dividend, however, was lifted 9 per cent to 2.5p. The shares fell 2 1/2p to 166 1/2p.

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War chest at Irish Permanent

By RICHARD MILES

IRISH PERMANENT, which has agreed a merger with Irish Life to form the Republic's third-largest financial services company, said yesterday it had a war chest of more than Ir£300 million (£260 million) to spend on acquisitions.

Reporting a 21 per cent rise in 1998 pre-tax profits to Ir£66.7 million, Roy Douglas, chief executive, said the group could spend between Ir£300 million and Ir£400 million on a deal. He also confirmed interest in buying the state-owned ICC Bank, likely to be privatised later this year.

Permanent, the country's top mortgage lender, said it expected to complete its Ir£2.8 billion merger with Irish Life by the end of April, bringing it closer to market leaders Allied Irish Banks and the Bank of Ireland.

The company said total new lending in 1998 leapt 38 per cent to Ir£1.5 billion. Net interest margins improved, as did its other income revenues. Cost-income ratio fell to 51.5 per cent from 54.8 per cent. Permanent will pay a total dividend of Ir£9.5p per share, a rise of 13.4 per cent.



John Randall leaves with a £454,000 payoff package. He had been at MFI for 20 years

Randall ousted at MFI

JOHN RANDALL has been ousted as chief executive of MFI, leaving the company after 20 years with a £454,000 payoff package. His departure was announced as the troubled furniture retailer issued another profits warning.

Derek Hunt, chairman, told Mr Randall that the board had lost confidence in him. John Hancock, the US director of WH Smith, is to become

the new chief executive — two months after joining MFI as a non-executive director.

Mr Hunt, who is due to retire as chairman in September, said he may now be persuaded to stay on to oversee the change-over. He said: "I could not bear to leave the company without seeing it in the right hands."

Mr Hancock said he will be looking at a range of reforms, and has not ruled out dropping the MFI brand name in

an attempt to take it upmarket. Mr Randall will receive £302,000 due from his 12-month contract and £152,000 in accrued pension payments.

His share options, exercisable at 115p and 120p, are worthless as the company shares are now 36p, sliding 1p yesterday.

MFI said its underlying sales in the past four months are 14 per cent lower than last time.

Commentary, page 27

Mortgage protection boost

By PAULA HAWKINS

THE Council of Mortgage Lenders (CML) and the Association of British Insurers (ABI) yesterday announced minimum specifications for mortgage payment protection.

The move is intended to encourage more homeowners to insure themselves against the threat of illness or redundancy. Under the guidelines, all accident, sickness and unemployment (ASU) policies will pay out after a maximum of 60 days and for no less than 12 months after that. Any changes to the cost or conditions of policies can only be made with six months' notice. The standards will allow "fewer automatic exclusions for medical conditions", according to the CML.

There is also improved cover for self-employed people or those in part-time employment. Contract workers will be able to make claims provided they have worked for the same employer for a year, while the self-employed are covered provided they have filed for bankruptcy and have registered for the Job Seeker's Allowance.

The guidelines take effect from July 1 for new policies and July 1, 2001, for existing policies.

First Technology in £89m US deal

FIRST TECHNOLOGY announced the \$145.1 million (£89 million) acquisition of America's Control Devices in a deal that unites two of the world's leading suppliers of vehicle safety products. The acquisition will be partly funded by a one-for-four rights issue of new First Technology shares at 320p each, raising £37.6 million. Existing shares fell 6 1/2p to 370p yesterday. Control Devices, whose shares are listed on Nasdaq, was the subject of a management buyout from CTE in 1996. In the last financial year it earned net income of \$7.9 million, up from \$5.9 million in the previous 12 months.

A number of shareholders of Control Devices, including senior managers, will subscribe for new First Technology shares worth £4.9 million. First Technology, which is capitalised at about £180 million, said yesterday that trading was most satisfactory, with group sales from continuing operations exceeding last year's levels. More than 90 per cent of First Technology's sales are made outside the UK.

Croda dividend move

CRODA INTERNATIONAL, the specialty chemicals group, yesterday said that its 1998 pre-tax profit would be in line with general market expectations, which stand at about £32 million. The company also said it would bring forward payment of its final dividend of 6.8p from July to April 1. This will enable Croda to class the payment as a foreign income dividend, which brings tax advantages that are due to be abolished on April 6. The shares rose 5p to 261 1/2p.

Allied merger nears

ALLIED LEISURE, the ten-pin bowling and Burger King restaurants operator, confirmed that it is in merger talks with European Leisure, the nightclubs and cue sports group. As *The Times* reported last week, the two are discussing a nil-premium merger, although analysts expect Allied's directors to control the new board. A deal could be announced next week. The market welcomed the news, with Allied's shares gaining 2p to 27 1/2p and European closing 1 1/2p higher at 70p.

Kvaerner into the red

KVAERNER, the Anglo-Norwegian shipping and engineering group, reported pre-tax losses of 1.35 billion crowns (£105 million) against profits last year of 1.51 billion crowns, sending the company's shares tumbling by more than 6 per cent on the Oslo bourse. Kjell Almskog, president, said: "These unsatisfactory results reflect very negative business developments for Kvaerner in 1998. The year was marked by decline in our main markets and a change of management and of priorities."

Vymura prospects lift

VYMURA, the wallpaper manufacturer, saw its shares rise 10 1/2p to 73 1/2p as it reported a good start to 1999. Pre-tax profit for the year ended December 31 was £3.2 million, down from £5.1 million, but ahead of market expectations. Turnover was £40.6 million (£41 million). Andrew Garey, the chairman, said that sales in January were ahead of budget, and he expects "opportunities for sales growth". Earnings per share were 9.4p (14.2p) and the final dividend of 4p (3.8p) gives a total for the year of 5.7p (5.4p).



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back as
things rise

water blocks

Not so fast, prime minister



COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

Tony Blair insisted yesterday that he was not signalling a change of policy, merely a change of gear. In Britain's move towards euroland, if he changes gear with his foot on the accelerator, as he appears to be advocating, Cherie and the children might be well advised to take the bus in future.

With this gear change, he admits to advocating government spending on systems which may never be needed. What is more, he calls on business to do the same. Businessmen, even those who want to see Britain's earliest possible entry into euroland, should ignore such exhortations. Shareholders would have every reason to feel aggrieved if their companies started to invest now in preparation for something which may never happen. Until there is a commitment to Britain joining the single currency, it would be foolhardy for organisations to pay for the preparations that would then be necessary. Even Mr Blair in his most presidential gear has accepted that there must be a referendum before that can happen, albeit that the economic tests he and Chancellor Gordon Brown have formulated are regarded as sufficiently flexible as to constitute no obstacle.

Britain's banks have already been made aware of the Government's view that they should be making ready for Britain's entry

into the single currency. They have responded politely, but firmly, that they do not intend to gamble in that way. They are already investing heavily in preparing for the certainty that the year 2000 will arrive. They have coped perfectly happily with the advent of the euro.

But banks, as other businesses, are used to dealing with foreign currencies. That does not lead inevitably to them giving up their own. Mr Blair made much yesterday of the fact that 86 per cent of large retailers have suppliers in the eurozone and 44 per cent of them are planning to pay those suppliers in euros. This was, apparently, seen as demonstrative of the fact that we are almost in euroland. But as Mr Blair should know from the brand names that his children parade across their chests, many British retailers also have suppliers in the United States. It is a fair bet that plenty of those are paid in dollars. Such transactions have been going on happily for many years and without benefit of a National Changeover Plan.

The debate about the single currency is not yet over and busi-

ness should not be bamboozled into believing that it is. Neither should the Department of Social Security or other government departments be spending taxpayers' money on false assumptions. The indications are that the public sector still has enormous work to do in eradicating the millennium bug. That is where systems expenditure and effort should be concentrated until our entry into euroland is agreed.

Eddie's confusion costs us too much

Eddie George is one of those fellows who knows so much and yet so little. In humble mood yesterday, the Governor confessed to the Commons Treasury Select Committee that he found the continued strength of sterling against the euro difficult to explain. As he was speaking the euro fell to its

lowest ever against our threatened currency, about 67.5p.

Allowing for conversion from marks or francs, that is the sort of exchange rate that in 1998 brought the biggest UK trade deficit with the rest of the world since 1989. That was the year that our economy was overheating ahead of a painful recession induced by monetary policy.

Few would contend that the UK economy was overheating in 1998. Rather, it just managed to reach the end of December without stopping altogether.

Others might not find the euro's weakness against the pound so hard to explain. Even after the latest Bank of England interest rate cut and before the expected cut by the European Central Bank in a month's time, there is still a 2.5 point gap between the ECB's euro rate of 3 per cent and the UK base rate of 5.5 per cent.

Currency trends are about ex-

pectations rather than absolutes. Even DeAnne Julius, the dove who flies sorties from the ark of the Monetary Policy Committee, argued that UK monetary policy was now in the neutral zone of 4-6 per cent. If that means anything, it is that any rate below 4 per cent would be a deliberate attempt to get a slumping economy moving and stop prices falling. And that is not likely.

The Governor provided the other side of the explanation for the euro's hardly sparkling debut: America's economy has been more robust than expected while that of continental Europe has been weaker.

Expectations being what counts, euroland's failure to live up to them is more damaging than the UK's comparatively, but expected, slower growth. The implication for any trader is that UK short-term rates will remain higher than those obtainable on euro funds for the foreseeable fu-

ture, probably by a comfortable margin. And what that means for anyone who has to compete with suppliers overseas is that life is not going to get any easier.

A short-term benefit to exporters is not, however, a strong enough reason for a long-term move into euroland.

Pulling all the right Unilevers

Naill FitzGerald, who enthuses over the single currency as vociferously as he warns of the perils of the millennium bug, was the hero of the stock market yesterday having admitted that his shareholders could probably use £5 billion better than he could.

Institutional investors applaud such honesty rather than regarding it as evidence of a lack of imagination. But then they too demonstrate a singular lack of imagination with what to do with the cash. As the FTSE 100 shot up yesterday, the 350 barely moved. Fund managers do not want to look beyond the majors, so if Footsie companies insist on handing them back their cash, the

chances are that it will not be long before it is piled back into the same stocks.

The proceeds from selling its speciality chemicals business to ICI have been sitting in Unilever's pockets for a couple of years. There have been acquisitions during that time but not the big deal that the gossips had advocated. This special dividend does not preclude an opportunistic pounce by Mr FitzGerald, but it has enhanced his reputation in the City. His former colleague, Charles Miller Smith, who handed him the £5 billion, has not fared so well. Far from handing cash back to shareholders, ICI is the proud possessor of a speciality chemicals business, but may be forced to cut its dividend in the next 12 months.

Hancock's hour

HOW far-sighted of John Hancock to have accepted a non-executive directorship of MFI last year. Now that the dismal performer has dispensed with the services of his chief executive, Mr Hancock can slide smoothly into the role without any head-hunting fees. But has John Hancock's abrupt departure been enough to preserve Derek Hunt's reign as chairman? If he survives past his professed September retirement date, it will be proof that Mr Hunt is made of tougher stuff than some MFI furniture.

BG set to avoid regulator with Transco revamp

By CARL MORTISHED, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDITOR

BG, the company which owns Transco, Britain's gas pipeline company, is developing plans to create a £1 billion business out of Transco's operations and maintenance activities in order to shift a large part of BG's business out of the control of the industry regulator.

The restructuring of Transco would separate the management of its £12 billion of pipeline assets from the operational side of the business, opening the door to competitive tendering and subcontracting in a similar way to how Railtrack runs the railways. Ultimately, the operations could be deregulated.

Philip Hampton, finance director of BG said the plan was to generate value by creating a competitive business which would escape regulatory control. "The regulator continues to tighten the screw on costs but if you get more trans-

parency, there is no longer an argument about what the costs should be."

BG also announced plans to merge the management of its upstream exploration and international gas businesses under the leadership of Frank Chapman, exploration director. At the same time, BG revealed a rise in fourth-quarter pre-tax profit from £373 million to £426 million and a final dividend increase of 7.5 per cent to 4.3p, making a full-year payout of 8.6p.

Transco's operating profits surged from £253 million to £444 million, thanks to colder weather which helped to boost volumes by 4 per cent, offsetting a 1997 price cut of 13 per cent.

David Varney, BG's chief executive said that the merger of the upstream exploration arm and BG's international gas business would sharpen its competitive edge. However,

he denied that it was a prelude to a demerger. BG's upstream was forced to write down its investment in Komat Arctic Oil, a Russian joint venture, by £81 million, leaving profits of £31 million for the quarter. Production was up 18 per cent but the growth was more than offset by falling oil and gas prices.

Mr Varney sought to dampen speculation that BG was plotting a bid for either Lasso or Enterprise, the two oil explorers currently in merger discussions. Referring to the option of growth by acquisition, he said: "Assets are still fully priced."

Mr Hampton said that shifting Transco's operational businesses out of regulatory control could create scope for profitable divestments. They represent cash expenditure of about £1 billion including employment costs of £600 million.

Tempos, page 28

ABP extends buyback as earnings rise

By PAUL ARMSTRONG

ASSOCIATED British Ports Holdings has extended its £100 million share buyback by £50 million and says property sales could finance further increases.

Sir Keith Stuart, chairman, said yesterday that, though it would take another ten years to fully dispose of its substantial property portfolio, shareholder value would be fully recognised by such a move as it was property investments that were responsible for ABP's poor share price performance. With ABP stock trading at about the same level as five years ago, Sir Keith said the market had failed to understand its property divisions.

His comments came after ABP announced a 4.6 per cent increase in 1998 pre-tax earnings to £110.2 million, which failed to move its shares in a generally buoyant trading day on the market. Though the results were in line with market expectations, the shares closed 3p lower at 26.5p. A final dividend of 5.75p takes the full-year payout to 10.25p (9p).

The company's ports division managed a 9 per cent rise in operating profit to £126.7 million after big falls in steel ex-



Stuart: property sales

ports were offset by higher volumes of grain, vehicles and petroleum products. Sir Keith said ABP was exposed to the impact of the Asian economic crisis on many British exports but profit margins had held up.

He did not envisage increased price pressure this year, partly because of the long-term nature of ABP's port contracts. The property investment division, which generates rental income, reported a 14 per cent rise in operating profit to £16.7 million. Earnings from property development, which includes land sales, were 5 per cent higher at £6.8 million.

Admiral shares on the slide

Shares of Admiral, the IT services group, fell 9 per cent after the company reported results that failed to satisfy analysts' expectations. Admiral reported a 34 per cent rise in pre-tax profits for the year to December 31 from £17.5 million to £23.5 million on sales of £147 million, up 26 per cent. Normalised earnings per share rose from 17.8p to 25.2p. The company said it would pay a final dividend of 2.4p (2p), bringing the total for the year to 35p, up from 29p. Shares of the company fell from £14.17 to £12.90.

Tempos, page 28

Eidos Net service Eidos, the video games publisher behind titles such as *Tomb Raider* and *Michael Owen's World League Soccer* yesterday became the latest company to offer a free Internet access service. The service offers multiple e-mail addresses, 20MB of personal web space, a news service, and telephone support charged at 50p a minute.

Biomedix search KS Biomedix is seeking marketing partners for its treatment for osteoarthritis, which has completed a phase II trial that suggested it was more effective than an existing therapy. Losses for the six months to November 30 were £534,000 (£557,000 loss).

Regulator blocks Olivetti

By CARL MORTISHED

OLIVETTI reacted angrily yesterday to the decision by Consob, the Italian stock exchange regulator, to reject its £36 billion bid for Telecom Italia. The ambitious conglomerate is now scrambling to put together a firm offer in order to pre-empt any attempt by the privatised utility to erect defences to a takeover.

Olivetti accused Consob yesterday of reaching a decision without consultation. It said:

"Consob's decision has been reached having received only comments of Telecom Italia and not those of Olivetti."

The decision by Consob, the Italian stock exchange regulator, to reject the bid has dramatically increased the pressure on Olivetti. Franco Bernabè, chief executive of Telecom Italia, is expected to reveal Telecom's industrial strategy later this week, an opportunity to wrong-foot Olivetti's bid strategy.

The board of Olivetti will to-

day consider a five trillion lire cash call on its shareholders to create a war chest to finance its bid. The capital raising is likely to be underwritten by Bell, a Luxembourg company and 13 per cent shareholder that is controlled by Roberto Colaninno, Olivetti's chief executive.

The underwriting will fuel the concern of Telecom Italia shareholders that a minority of Olivetti investors will end up controlling Europe's third-largest telephone company.

Generators spiked

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY

POWER generators face new restrictions on their ability to increase the price of electricity before an overhaul of the market.

Callum McCarthy, the electricity and gas regulator, yesterday set out proposals to streamline the bidding process so that price spikes will be minimised. There is a fear that, before the

market — the electricity pool — is completely reorganised next year, the generators will indulge in greater manipulation, than they are already accused of.

The plans are designed to cut prices before the market is changed without imposing a price cap. John Battle, the Energy and Industry Minister, said: "We are determined that customers should not suffer as a result of the ability of generators to manipulate pool prices."

NYSE open all hours

By OLIVER AUGUST

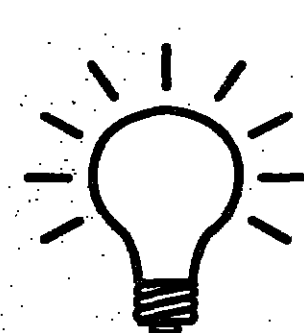
RICHARD GRASSO, chairman of the New York Stock Exchange, yesterday suggested that the world's biggest stock market could soon be open for trading almost 24 hours a day. In a bid to fight off competition from other markets, the NYSE is expected to lengthen trading hours in June next year.

Mr Grasso said: "It is not unreasonable to expect the Big Board to open at 5am and close at midnight." Currently, trading is restricted to 9.30am to 4pm.

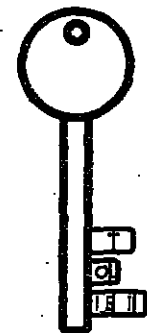
Companies on the New York exchange are being wooed by the Nasdaq market, which is expanding quickly after the merger with the American Exchange, the third biggest US exchange.

Dealers on Nasdaq trade electronically while the New York Stock Exchange still features open outcry trading.

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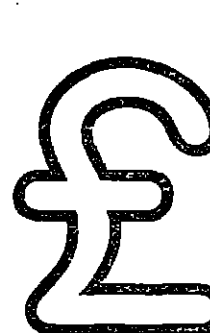
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You use the One account to pay your bills. You agree a limit on how much you need to borrow - anything from £100 up to the total value of your home. You can then spend up to this limit now and when you please, such as on home improvements or, if you'd prefer, a round the world yacht. You can also use the One account to pay your bills, including your mortgage, by setting up a direct debit. You can also use the One account to pay your bills, including your mortgage, by setting up a direct debit. You can also use the One account to pay your bills, including your mortgage, by setting up a direct debit.



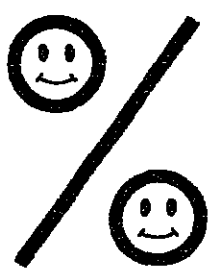
You can pay off your borrowing as quickly or slowly as you like, as long as it's paid by the date you tell us. Pay off more if you have surplus cash to hand if you want to speed extra repayments. There's no pressure to do so. You can also use the One account to pay your bills, including your mortgage, by setting up a direct debit. You can also use the One account to pay your bills, including your mortgage, by setting up a direct debit.



Interest is calculated daily, so you get the benefit of all the money you pay into your account every day. You save the interest of pounds in interest simply by paying your bills and savings into your account in one place. You can also use the One account to pay your bills, including your mortgage, by setting up a direct debit.



For example, if you had an annual salary of £30,000 and spent it evenly throughout the month, just by paying your wages into your One account you would repay a 25 year mortgage of £50,000 in 10 months early - saving over £3,000. If an annual pay rise of 5% were added, with just one fifth of it left in your account each year, the loan would be repaid 9 years, 6 months earlier - saving you £36,055!



For savings you have and work harder in a One account because they again reduce your borrowings. The interest you save is far more than you would earn by putting your money in a deposit account. Not only that but because you're saving interest, and not earning it, there's no tax to pay. You can get at your money whenever you want, with no notice and no penalties. All you ever have to do is write a cheque, or use your One account switch and VISA cards, which are valid at almost every cash machine in the UK.



Each month you receive a statement telling you exactly how much you've saved, and how much you've saved. You can also use the One account to pay your bills, including your mortgage, by setting up a direct debit. You can also use the One account to pay your bills, including your mortgage, by setting up a direct debit.



Finally, there's 24 hour access to the Virgin One account. You can use it to do anything from saving to checking your balance. 7 days a week. You can also use the One account to pay your bills, including your mortgage, by setting up a direct debit. You can also use the One account to pay your bills, including your mortgage, by setting up a direct debit.

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STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

FTSE 100 comes within whisker of record high

INVESTORS had the bit between their teeth as the market came within a whisker of its record closing high.

Wall Street's continuing advance on the 10,000 level at the outset of trading fuelled the latest buying spree in London, although prices did close below their best levels of the day.

Even so, the FTSE 100 index touched 6,185.2 before eventually closing 85.3 higher at 6,155.2, just 23.8 short of its record close of 6,179.0, achieved in July last year.

Attention switched back to blue chip stocks with second-liners struggling to make headway. This was reflected in the FTSE 250 index which finished 5.7 up at 5,186.4. A total of 922 million shares changed hands.

Investor enthusiasm was also fuelled by the better than expected results from NatWest Bank, up 45p to £13.19, after briefly touching £13.78, and the £5 billion special payment for shareholders proposed by Unilever, up 1p to 624p, after hitting 628p.

There was also a positive response to final results from BGC, up 34p to 364p, which revealed a strong final-quarter performance from its Transco division. The company announced plans to merge its exploration and production and downstream divisions but refused to comment on speculation that it might bid for either Lameco, steady at 110p, or Enterprise Oil, up 1p to 239p.

CGU was a nervous market ahead of final results today falling 18p to 92p. Brokers are braced for a near-halving of pre-tax profits to £500 million, although there should be scope for an increase in the dividend from 32p to 35p.

Vodafone received a welcome boost from Merrill Lynch, the broker, that sent the price climbing 33p to £11.72. It is still looking for a target price for the shares of £15 by the year end and has raised its profit forecast for 2000 to £1 billion followed by £1.42 billion in 2001. Merrill says the mobile phone market remains a growth area and forecasts that Vodafone could achieve 70 per cent market penetration by 2004.

A "buy" recommendation from BT Alex Brown, the broker, provided Gallahue with a rise of 3p to 423p. Tony Silberman at BTAB says the shares have underperformed



David Varney, chief executive, left, and Philip Hampton, finance director of BGC, which closed 34p better at 364p

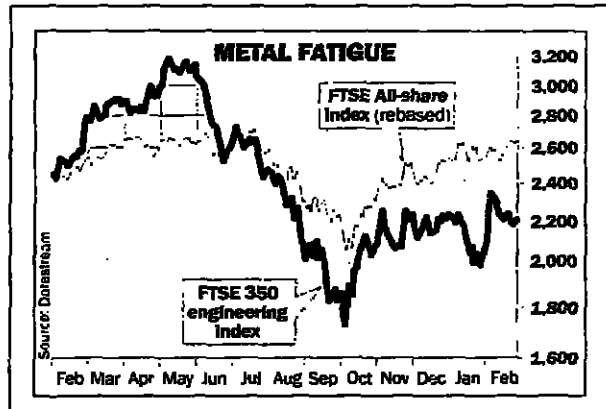
rival Imperial Tobacco, up 4p to 726p, by 16 per cent since October.

Some bullish comments from Morgan Stanley, the US securities house, bolstered Nycomed Amersham 21p to 410p. It rates the shares a "strong buy" and has raised its target price from 460p to 525p.

Price war worries left Tesco 1p higher at 172p ahead of a

meeting with brokers. The company has just announced price cuts on a number of leading lines estimated to be worth £60 million. Charterhouse Tilney, the broker, says the move by Tesco is bad news for the rest of the sector. Somerfield fell 1p to 341p, Iceland 8p to 259p and Morrison Supermarkets 4p to 315p.

Ladbrokes rose 1p to 272p as



THIS week has seen a revival in the fortunes of Britain's engineers. Support has been forthcoming for the likes of Weir Group, up 11p to 266p, having already slumped from a low of 307p.

Others that have started to attract attention include Delta, up 6p to 117p, TI Group, 8p firmer at 380p, Cookson, 2p up at 144p, and Cammell Laird 27p dearer at 762p.

But brokers such as BT Alex Brown are cautious. John Pearson at BTAB

ABN Amro, the broker, moved its recommendation from "undervalued" to "buy" and set a target price of 300p. Stalks rose 3p to 159p in sympathy.

Devo came bouncing off its lows with a rise of 18p to 163p. The maker of sausage skins is clearly vulnerable to a bid having seen its price drop from a peak of 545p in May last year, following several profit warnings.

Colin Bramall, the new finance director at Universal Salvage, has purchased 5,000 shares in the company. The price responded with a rise of 2p to 59p.

BGR Group advanced 30p to 150p following an upbeat post-results presentation for brokers and fund managers on Monday night. It coincided with the opening of a new restaurant called Fish, in Borough Market, South London. BGR is expected to develop Fish into a nationwide chain.

Confirmation that it was in bid talks gave Coutts Consulting a boost with the price adding 7p, or almost 25 per cent, to 35p. At these levels, the group carries a price tag of £17.5 million. News of a bid approach lifted BS Group 25p to 145p.

A profits warning from Caluma after the close of official business left the shares nursing a fall of 4p to 25p. The computer drive specialist says profits for the full year will be substantially below expectations. Almost ten million shares had changed before the close.

MFI Furniture was also hit by a late profits warning leaving the price 1p easier at 36p. John Randall has resigned as chief executive and will be replaced by John Hancock.

GILT-EDGED: Bond prices enjoyed an early mark up but then spent the rest of the day trading in narrow limits. Attempts to sell off the long gilt future failed with brokers reporting support around the £17.80 level. In the event, it closed 29p better at £17.86 as the total number of contracts completed reached 33,000. Among conventional issues, Treasury 8 per cent 2021 put on the 62p to £149.58, while at the shorter end Treasury 7 per cent 2002 was 9p dearer at £107.27.

NEW YORK: US shares were mixed in choppy trading as investors reacted to Alan Greenspan's comments about the economy. At midday the Dow Jones industrial average was up 15.73 points to 9,568.41.

MAJOR INDICES

New York (midday):

Dow Jones 9568.41 (+15.73)

S&P Composite 1275.14 (+3.02)

Tokyo 14600.05 (+243.50)

Nikkei Average 9433.99 (+204.05)

Amsterdam 356.69 (+8.38)

Sydney 3292.0 (+7.7)

Frankfurt 397.56 (+142.38)

Singapore 1400.43 (+10.25)

Brussels 3444.30 (+0.64)

Paris 4207.55 (+142.03)

Zurich 1370.10 (+4.30)

London:

FTSE 100 6155.2 (+85.3)

FTSE 250 5186.4 (+5.7)

FTSE 1000 2812.38 (+32.41)

FTSE All-Share 2855.04 (+27.59)

FTSE Four Index 158.10 (+0.40)

FTSE Small Cap 115.22 (+0.80)

Barracks 10222

EASD Volume 12111 (+0.0116)

Euro 0.8816 (+0.0018)

ZSR 11833

Bank of England official rate (per cent) 5.00

RPI 163.4 Jan (2.4%) Jan 1997-100

RPI 161.8 Jan (2.4%) Jan 1987-100

RECENT ISSUES

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Accor Income Fund 101

BSI Group Inc & Genl Cap 95

BSI Group Inc & Genl Cap 120

Close Bros Dev VCT 100

Enhanced Zero Trust 100

Golden Prospects 7

Jupiter En Dev Pl 29

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TEMPUS

Wild West is tamed

THE strategy at NatWest to turn its back on the complicated bits of banking to concentrate on the retail side appears to be working. That is certainly the strong message from yesterday's annual results.

Less generous observers will point out that the profits only looked as good as they did because the group was relieved of the enormous losses incurred by NatWest Markets in 1997. But while 1998 results were clearly flattered by the absence of the losses, the fact that there was no troublesome NatWest Markets there to spoil the results only emphasised why the numbers were worthy of celebration.

The tail end of NatWest's investment banking exposure may return to cast a shadow. Profits flowing from the normal retail branch banking are undeniably flat too. But while growth will be difficult to secure in operating

ordinary current accounts, there is much less risk of encountering disaster. It provides a stable platform from which the search for growth can be launched.

In these results the good growth seen in "wealth management" — Gartmore unit trusts and pensions savings management — is notable in this context. So is the mortgage business and insurance.

In adding 45p to close at £13.19 NatWest shares are within a whisker of their all-time high. Valued in dividend yield terms the shares now look fully valued, with the gross income at 3.4 per cent.

Yet Lloyds TSB shows how how profitable it is to mine the retail banking seam. NatWest, being that much further behind Lloyds in the recovery/restructuring process, has greater opportunity for finding further growth. Hold.

Admiral

ADMIRAL, the information technology consulting, software and training company, is perhaps one of the most reliable performers in the sector.

But it unnerved many yesterday by reporting profits at the low end of estimates, and putting out a strange and rather bullish — trading statement.

Clay Brendish, Admiral's super-slick executive chairman, seemed to hint that the company's 15 per cent margin could suffer as it focuses on its strategy of international expansion. Indeed, he made a big point of telling shareholders that he would take a three to five-year view, and "not be coloured by the needs of the short and medium term".

That sounded like investors were being softened up for bad news.

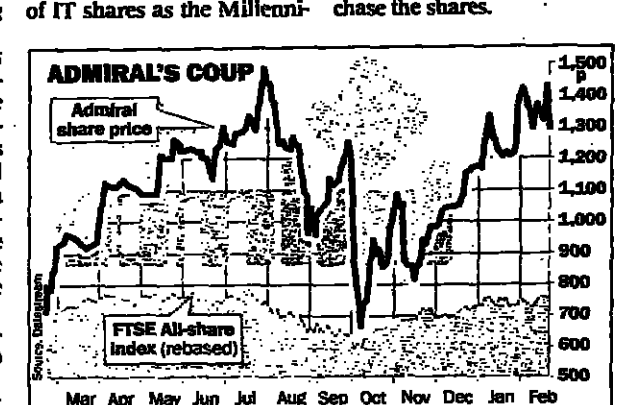
Brendish also chose to ask

questions such as: "How much IT spend is on Year 2000 and Euro issues?" And: "Will current levels of growth continue?" Most investors would have preferred answers.

Admiral's margins probably will suffer with most future growth set to come from geographic expansion. Some of the puff is bound to go out of IT shares as the Millennium

approaches, too. Longer term, good growth is sustainable, but given the go-slower signals from the firm it is not surprising that Admiral's shares fell 9 per cent yesterday.

Admittedly the shares have run up strongly in the past few days but it trades on more than 40 times' forecast earnings. This is the wrong time to chase the shares.



BG

BG IS doing remarkably well upstream. Last year it achieved the extraordinary feat of finding hydrocarbons in 25 out of the 35 wells it drilled. Such a record is unsustainable longer term but shows that the old gas utility is no amateur at the drillbit.

Now it has merged the exploration with the international gas arm. BG is moving closer towards a business with an independent identity and one which, were the oil price a bit higher, would have ample cashflow to finance itself.

The BG board insists that exploration and international gas has synergies with Transco, the household pipeline business. The British Gas name may still open doors in emerging markets but nomenclature is hardly sufficient reason to keep disparate businesses together.

BC is trying to do all the right things, gearing up its

balance sheet, taking more of Transco's operation out from under the regulatory cosh and improving the performance of the upstream arm.

But the faster BG reforms itself, the greater the argument to demerge, again. Exploration and international gas is a more speculative business, needing more equity than the safe Transco utility.

Investors should get a hefty cash repayment later this year from the Transco side. Demerger of the upstream side cannot be discounted either. The transformation of BG is definitely not over. Hold.

Housebuilders

DESPITE the mini-rally in the value of shares in quoted UK housebuilders over the past month, the stocks still trade at levels that look miserably low in comparison with their history and against many other more fashionable sectors.

Housebuilders are unlikely to ascend to, or deserve, super-premium valuations. But there are good reasons to have exposure to the sector. There is pent up demand for housing in the country as planning constraints restrict supply. Houses are becoming more affordable with every interest cut, and housebuilders are capitalising by building and selling bigger houses. There is potential for takeover excitement as well.

Wimpey appears to offer better value to investors than Beazer. It seems more determined to please and the US exposure gives more growth excitement.

EDITED BY ROBERT COLE

COMMODITIES

LIFTS			
Mar	Apr	May	Jun
COCA	915.120	915.120	915.120
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ROBUST COFFEE			
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WHITE SUGAR (NO)			
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MEAT & LIVESTOCK COMMISSION			
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Le Meridien restores bistro chic to its dining rooms



Michel Rostang: not tempted by traditional British fare

Despite the best efforts of Sir Terence Couran and his London rivals, France remains the gastronomic centre of the world, and it is a matter of pride that even the most humble street-corner bistros serve high-quality food at remarkable prices.

It is ironic, therefore, that it has taken British ownership for the bosses of Le Meridien Hotels & Resorts, one of France's foremost hotel chains since it was founded by Air France 27 years ago, to realise that its hotel dining facilities are letting the side down. A favourite jibe of the cynics has been that the chain's food is comparable with that found in the airline's economy class.

The result is that Meridien, part of Forti and then Granada since 1994, has signed a five-year deal with one of Paris's top chefs to breathe new life into its jaded dining rooms. Michel

Dominic Walsh reports on Granada's efforts to breathe life into the hotel chain's jaded restaurants

Rostang, whose £9 million turnover business includes a two-Michelin-starred restaurant and the popular Le Bistrot d'A Côté chain, is to be paid an estimated £100,000 a year to oversee the introduction of a number of different restaurant formats.

Bernard Lambert, managing director of Meridien, admitted that, although some of the group's hotels had attracted Michelin-starred chefs, things had become "a bit static" in recent years. "I want to get away from the hotel dining room concept," he said. "What I want to bring is a feeling that people are running their own restaurants, not simply a hotel facility. There is nothing more unpleasant

than having someone putting out the coffee cups for breakfast when you're still finishing your dinner."

The first evidence of M Rostang's influence is being felt at the group's London flagship, on Piccadilly, already home to Marco Pierre White, the controversial three-Michelin-starred chef, who has a lease on the Oak Room. The company has spent £500,000 redeveloping the first-floor Terrace restaurant, which reopened this week as a brasserie serving mainly French food for about £25 to £30 a head, including wine.

M Rostang is diplomatic about the job he faces, insisting that Meridien "has a very good reputation as a ho-

telier". One of the first things he had to do for the London project was get round the stringent buying policies introduced by Granada after it bought Forti three years ago. "We have managed to change the policy for some products," he said. "For example, we will have poulet de Bresse rather than ordinary chicken." Asked whether he was tempted to include traditional British dishes such as steak and kidney pudding on the menu, he responded with a Gallic shrug: "I don't know how to do it."

Although M Rostang will make occasional visits across the Channel, the kitchen will be run on a full-time basis by Pascale Even, who has

worked with him for almost ten years. "We're not trying to create a gastronomic restaurant," he said. "What we're trying to do is mix the gastronomic with the style of a bistro. It will be a casual restaurant with a French touch."

The second project, due to open early next year, will be at Le Meridien Étoile in Paris, the chain's first hotel, which opened in 1972. Here M Rostang has developed a less formal bistro concept that both parties hope will be capable of being rolled out across the 100-strong chain, although menus will allow for local culture. Cities already earmarked are Amsterdam, Monte Carlo, New Orleans, Dallas and Taipei, with Cologne, Frankfurt and the Ritz Madrid to follow.

"We will do half a dozen a year as a minimum, time permitting," said M Lambert.

Single currency would put UK's unconverted in a spin

Sarah Cunningham, Fraser

Nelson and Caroline Merrell ask

whether Britain is ready for the euro

If Britain decides to adopt the euro, one of the more rather bizarre side effects will be that security guards will find themselves much in demand. If, as the Government indicated yesterday, there are six months during which sterling and the euro run in parallel, retailers will have to accept payment in pounds and give change in euros. The guards will be needed to keep a close eye on the pounds piling up in the shops, and to ferry the currency to its final resting place.

Who will pay the wages of these guards is a moot point between the Government and the retail sector. It is by no means the only one. The British Retail Consortium had been looking for a clear three years between a referendum decision to join and the introduction of euro cash. Tony Blair told Parliament yesterday that it could be as little as two years. The BRC says that a swift conversion to the euro could cost the industry as much as £4 billion as staff retraining and computer programming is rushed through. Taking a full three years could cost half that total.

Mr Blair's suggestion that industry should begin making big investments now, before Britain has decided whether to join, also failed to find a welcome. Martin Cooper, a senior manager at Deloitte Consulting, said: "People will not commit shareholders' resources until it is definite."

Larger retailers that already have operations in euroland, such as Tesco, Marks & Spencer and Boots, are exceptions. They are going to have to learn to live with euros whether Britain joins or not, and have had to prepare for the new currency. Boots has estimated that it will cost £40 million to prepare for the change in The Netherlands and the Republic of Ireland, where it has stores, and the UK. Training staff will account for most of the cost.

As the Government recognises in its National Changeover Plan, there are a host of issues for the retail and financial services sectors. Of particular concern to small traders is that a long period of parallel trading would mean that they had to double their numbers of tills — one for pounds, one for euros. The larger players, with computerised systems, will have fewer problems.

Moss Bros, which owns Hugo Boss, Blazer and Cecil

Gee, has programmed its computerised tills to convert any price to euros. Rowland Gee, its managing director, said: "All it took was a couple of lines of computer program. It was no problem at all."

But Mr Gee suspects that retailers do have one trick up their sleeve, which could be bad news for shoppers but good news for shops.

When sterling is finally wiped out, he says, retailers will find that a £34.99 shirt carrying a new price tag of €23.77 — a far less eye-catching price.

A red-blooded retailer would be tempted to round this up to €24.99 — a cheeky 5 per cent price rise. He said: "UK retailers rounded up during decimalisation in 1971. This is already happening in Germany — 29 marks works out at something like €14.50, and that's not a very attractive price. So they mark it up, and you have a bit of inflation creeping in."

Among the smaller companies, slot machine operators will suffer some of the worst upheavals. In the last few years the industry has had to accommodate the new 50p and £2 coins — but the industry is now having to prepare for a complete changeover.

Steve Jones owns Plymouth Fruit Machines, which rents out about 175 slot machines to clubs and pubs along the south coast of England. He said: "This will be very, very difficult for us. It cost us £6,500 to accept the new 50p pieces. With the euro it will be a whole new coin set, so the cost will be double that at least."

The coin slots are normally big enough to cope with anything, and will not need to be altered. Conversion is a matter of teaching the machines to recognise different weights of new coins — this can be done by changing the microchip.

Mr Jones says he can either call in mechanics, who charge about £35 per machine, or buy his own microchips and software at a cost of £1,500 — and take a hit on profits.

The fruit machine producers are in a much better position. Almost all of the main players supply continental Europe as well as the UK, so they won't need the 30 months to come up with new technology.

MayGay, the UK's largest independent fruit machine producer, churns out about 20,000 units a year from its 200-strong workforce in Wolverhampton. Dean Harding, its sales director, said: "Because we export to other countries, we're going to



M&S has already started displaying prices in both euros and guilders in The Netherlands SARAH CUNNINGHAM

THE EURO FEAR COSTS BEFORE EMU

Banks will be in the frontline when it comes to explaining the real implications of the euro to the public. However, they are reluctant to commit themselves to spending hundreds of millions of pounds before the Government sets a clear date for joining European Monetary Union.

Judging by the experience of European banks, Ian Harley, chief executive of Abbey National, believes that making

his organisation euro-ready will cost three or four times the £120 million it has spent on the millennium bug problem. Abbey argues no serious public company could commit itself to spending up to £500 million of its shareholders' money before the Government has even set the date for a referendum on the euro.

Computer systems will, inevitably, form the largest part of the euro bill.

M&S STAYS IN THE VAN

MARKS & SPENCER, which has stores across Europe, is by common consent the best prepared of all Britain's retailers for the introduction of the euro. Preparation has not been cheap, however. The retailer has spent £150 million on developing and fitting a whole new till system. Other costs, including the training of staff, come on top of that.

The company is keen to emphasise that its decision to prepare so thoroughly for the euro was by no means a political one: it simply became a necessity as the countries which it had expanded into across Europe — including France, Germany, The Netherlands and Spain — decided to adopt the single currency in the first wave. "One of the advantages of the split of the business is that we can learn from what's happening in continental Europe," a spokesman said.

Although euro notes and coins are not going to be introduced in euroland until 2002, the company has already started displaying prices in both euros and guilders in The Netherlands. It will start doing the same in other parts of euroland in the coming months. The new tills will show transaction costs in both the national currency and euros.

The 11,000 tills, the backbone of Marks & Spencer's euro preparation, will be fitted by the end of this year. At that point, the company will be as ready as can be reasonably expected for the single currency.

SARAH CUNNINGHAM

take the pain and get on the learning curve. By the time the euro is introduced to the UK, we'll have the discipline under our belt."

At the other end of the scale, the big banks are also facing big headaches. NatWest revealed yesterday that it had already spent £45 million on adapting its systems to dealing with the UK being out of the euro. Derek Wanless, chief executive, admitted that it would

have to spend many multiples of that amount to adapt the bank's systems to the UK joining the single currency.

The bank itself is neutral on whether the UK should join the euro or stay out. Tony Willis, group EMU coordinator, said: "Half of the money spent is on IT issues, while the rest is spent on training up staff."

He admitted that there was bound to be some effect on the foreign exchange revenue generated by

the bank as a result of joining the single currency. However, the revenue lost on foreign exchange because the bank was no longer trading sterling against the euro could be made up by trading the euro against the dollar and the yen.

Margaret Soden, Midland Bank's senior manager of EMU planning, said: "Money has been spent on the wholesale market operation. We have spent money on adapting

the major corporate foreign currency accounts." She also pointed out that the bank has expanded the payment mechanisms it offered its customers as part of its preparations.

Lloyds TSB has already spent £23 million on the euro project, and expects to see the total rise to £32 million. The bank, which has 14 million customers, said that if the UK joins the single currency, the costs could top £200 million.

PAUL DURMAN

Best advice

RELATIONS between the Financial Services Authority and the trade body for the investment industry have turned fragile again. The row began when Kevin James, a researcher with the FSA, produced a paper claiming that fund managers were overcharging wildly for their services.

His research was rubbished by the Association of Unit Traders and Investment Funds, but enough leaked to embarrass the fund managers.

I have a copy of a letter that has now gone out from Philip Warland, Auti's director-general, to members. In it he queries "how a researcher in the FSA was allowed to spend so much time on such worthless research".

He says the affair has damaged the industry's relationship with the regulator and suggests how to prevent its recurrence. The FSA needs a "research advisory panel" drawn from academics, the investment industry and the regulator to decide what research the latter may carry out.

This would mean fund managers giving orders to an independent regulator, and understandably, it has not gone down well at the FSA. Warland tells me he has floated the idea with a senior FSA official but has yet to hear back. I break it to him gently that the response is unlikely to be positive. "Well, there's a surprise."

ABOUT two decades ago the Financial Times produced one of its big special reports on Nigeria after an election there. The issue was, if memory serves, scheduled for early in January but was written some time beforehand. It began along the lines of "now that Nigeria has returned to stable government..."

On or about December 29 there was a military coup, and the whole survey had to be pulped. Yesterday the FT ran another one, again to mark the elections. This time it begins: "Nearly 40 years after it won independence from Britain..." On somewhat safer ground there, I think.

Trade off

I HAVE a statement here from Brian Wilson, the Trade Minister, on the latest trade figures.



Wilson: former journalist



which he welcomes. "This puts into perspective some of the gloomier accounts of how our exporters, backed by Government, are facing up to global difficulties," he warbles.

Is he really describing Britain's biggest trade deficit for almost a decade? Honestly, of all the bare-faced spin... I'm sorry. A colleague has just reminded me that Wilson started his career as a journalist.

TO ADD to its chapin over the William Hill sale, I hear that Warburg Dillon Read is receiving thousands of angry letters from frustrated private investors.

There are some ingenious suggestions for reparation. If Warburg were offering the shares at 135p in the offer and the business was sold for 150p, then surely would be investors should be receiving an extra 15p a share, or £1.111 for every £1,000 of shares they wanted?

Then there is the chap who took five grand out of a forex account. Since the withdrawal the forex market has turned against him, and he wants his money back.

Bear faced

I HAD always thought of builders as rugged, no-nonsense chaps in hard hats. But I learn from the trade paper Contract Journal that one firm is buying teddy bears for managers, who are encouraged to cuddle them in times of stress and ask them: "Teddy, what do you think?"

An arresting picture, is it not? Especially in their hard hats.

David Barker, a management consultant, has been seconded to Birse to help to reclaim £40 million owed on various projects. He is maintaining an enigmatic silence, but the teddy bear idea is his, the magazine claims.

Birse is, it seems, no stranger to eye-catching stunts. Last year, in pursuance of a claim for £11 million against a Welsh local council, staff dressed up as cartoon characters such as Bugs Bunny and paraded past the council offices. Don't ask why.

MARTIN WALLER
city.diary@the-times.co.uk

Inadequate cover is key to PPP dispute

From Mr Alan Shrank

If the London Consultants' Association are unhappy with PPP (February 19), one of the largest UK private medical insurance companies, because they insist on their insured being cared for only in certain hospitals, many of which they own, surely their objection is not restraint of trade but should be directed at the inadequacy of their patient's policy.

The contract that PPP has is with their insured clients. The doctor's contract is with their patient. If the insurance cover their patient enjoys does not cover treatment in the hospital the doctors regard as safe and appropriate, surely it is the policy cover that is inadequate and this should be pointed out to the patient.

When purchasing any insurance policy, whether for your car, your house or your valuables, it is essential to understand the exclusions exacted by the insurer.

Once accepted, no demand can be made of the insurer, for example, for subsidence or theft if they have been excluded from the policy.

London hospitals excluded from health policies are either the very expensive or small independent and often charitable hospitals, while those included are often owned by the insurer, a legitimate restriction not on trade but on the policy holder.

Exclusion of the small hospitals may eventually lead to their closure and their convenience for patients, because of proximity to their home, will be lost.

It is obviously important for prospective clients to know the significance of the exclusion of particular hospitals from their insurance policies and how this would affect their private medical care.

The difficulty arises when adequate facilities are not available at the listed hospitals, a fact not always appreciated by the patient. If hazard could arise, quite properly the doctor cannot be expected to take the risk.

Insurers must be aware of this hazard, and be prepared to make necessary adjustments.

Yours faithfully,
ALAN B. SHRANK,
20 Crescent Place,
Town Walls,
Shrewsbury
SY1 1TQ.

Warburg's sure thing

From Mr Eddie Walsh

Sir, After the debacle of the Thomson Travel share offer, one would think that Warburg Dillon Read would have earned its fees by being extra careful over the now pulled William Hill float.

Potential investors will be fuming while awaiting refunds of their already cashed cheques. The next time Warburgs act as flotation advisers the £30 at Ascot will seem a better bet.

Yours faithfully,
EDDIE WALSH,
7 Cotswold Court,
Beeston,
Nottingham,
NG9 3LJ.

The European Index-Tracking PEP

"Source: Microanal/LGEM on an offer to bid based on all PEP changes with gross income revalued from launch (€ 10.96 to € 12.99). Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. From the 06.04.99 tax credits on UK dividend distributions will only be able to be reclaimed by PEPs in a reduced rate of 10%. Both capital and income values may go down as well as up and you may not get back the amount you invested. The exchange rate fluctuations may cause the value of overseas investments to increase or decrease. Full written details are available on request. All statements are correct as at 01.02.99. The Government have announced that contributions can only be made to PEPs until April 1999. From this date a new tax privileged savings vehicle, the Individual Savings Account (ISA) will be available. Legal & General (Direct) Limited, Registered in England No. 2760880. Registered Office: Temple Court, 11 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4A 3DF. Representative only of the Legal & General marketing group, members of which are regulated by the Personal Investment Authority and INBO for the purposes of recommending, advising on and selling life insurance and investment products bearing Legal & General's name. 14257/100169/1/0299

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TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

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1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040	2041	2042	2043	2044	2045	2046	2047	2048	2049	2050	2051	2052	2053	2054	2055	2056	2057	2058	2059	2060	2061	2062	2063	2064	2065	2066	2067	2068	2069	2070	2071	2072	2073	2074	2075	2076	2077	2078	2079	2080	2081	2082	2083	2084	2085	2086	2087	2088	2089	2090	2091	2092	2093	2094	2095	2096	2097	2098	2099	2100	2101	2102	2103	2104	2105	2106	2107	2108	2109	2110	2111	2112	2113	2114	2115	2116	2117	2118	2119	2120	2121	2122	2123	2124	2125	2126	2127	2128	2129	2130	2131	2132	2133	2134	2135	2136	2137	2138	2139	2140	2141	2142	2143	2144	2145	2146	2147	2148	2149	2150	2151	2152	2153	2154	2155	2156	2157	2158	2159	2160	2161	2162	2163	2164	2165	2166	2167	2168	2169	2170	2171	2172	2173	2174	2175	2176	2177	2178	2179	2180	2181	2182	2183	2184	2185	2186	2187	2188	2189	2190	2191	2192	2193	2194	2195	2196	2197	2198	2199	2200	2201	2202	2203	2204	2205	2206	2207	2208	2209	2210	2211	2212	2213	2214	2215	2216	2217	2218	2219	2220	2221	2222	2223	2224	2225	2226	2227	2228	2229	2230	2231	2232	2233	2234	2235	2236	2237	2238	2239	2240	2241	2242	2243	2244	2245	2246	2247	2248	2249	2250	2251	2252	2253	2254	2255	2256	2257	2258	2259	2260	2261	2262	2263	2264	2265	2266	2267	2268	2269	2270	2271	2272	2273	2274	2275	2276	2277	2278	2279	2280	2281	2282	2283	2284	2285	2286	2287	2288	2289	2290	2291	2292	2293	2294	2295	2296	2297	2298	2299	2300	2301	2302	2303	2304	2305	2306	2307	2308	2309	2310	2311	2312	2313	2314	2315	2316	2317	2318	2319	2320	2321	2322	2323	2324	2325	2326	2327	2328	2329	2330	2331	2332	2333	2334	2335	2336	2337	2338	2339	2340	2341	2342	2343	2344	2345	2346	2347	2348	2349	2350	2351	2352	2353	2354	2355	2356	2357	2358	2359	2360	2361	2362	2363	2364	2365	2366	2367	2368	2369	2370	2371	2372	2373	2374	2375	2376	2377	2378	2379	2380	2381	2382	2383	2384	2385	2386	2387	2388	2389	2390	2391	2392	2393	2394	2395	2396	2397	2398	2399	2400	2401	2402	2403	2404	2405	2406	2407	2408	2409	2410	2411	2412	2413	2414	2415	2416	2417	2418	2419	2420	2421	2422	2423	2424	2425	2426	2427	2428	2429	2430	2431	2432	2433	2434	2435	2436	2437	2438	2439	2440	2441	2442	2443	2444	2445	2446	2447	2448	2449	2450	2451	2452	2453	2454	2455	2456	2457	2458	2459	2460	2461	2462	2463	2464	2465	2466	2467	2468	2469	2470	2471	2472	2473	2474	2475	2476	2477	2478	2479	2480	2481	2482	2483	2484	2485	2486	2487	2488	2489	2490	2491	2492	2493	2494	2495	2496	2497	2498	2499	2500	2501	2502	2503	2504	2505	2506	2507	2508	2509	2510	2511	2512	2513	2514	2515	2516	2517	2518	2519	2520	2521	2522	2523	2524	2525	2526	2527	2528	2529	2530	2531	2532	2533	2534	2535	2536	2537	2538	2539	2540	2541	2542	2543	2544	2545	2546	2547	2548	2549	2550	2551	2552	2553	2554	2555	2556	2557	2558	2559	2560	2561	2562	2563	2564	2565	2566	2567	2568	2569	2570	2571	2572	2573	2574	2575	2576	2577	2578	2579	2580	2581	2582	2583	2584	2585	2586	2587	2588	2589	2590	2591	2592	2593	2594	2595	2596	2597	2598	2599	2600	2601	2602	2603	2604	2605	2606	2607	2608	2609	2610	2611	2612	2613	2614	2615	2616	2617	2618	2619	2620	2621	2622	2623	2624	2625	2626	2627	2628	2629	2630	2631	2632	2633	2634	2635	2636	2637	2638	2639	2640	2641	2642	2643	2644	2645	2646	2647	2648	2649	2650	2651	2652	2653	2654	2655	2656	2657	2658	2659	2660	2661	2662	2663	2664	2665	2666	2667	2668	2669	2670	2671	2672	2673	2674	2675	2676	2677	2678	2679	2680	2681	2682	2683	2684	2685	2686	2687	2688	2689	2690	2691	2692	2693	2694	2695	2696	2697	2698	2699	2700	2701	2702	2703	2704	2705	2706	2707	2708	2709	2710	2711	2712	2713	2714	2715	2716	2717	2718	2719	2720	2721	2722	2723	2724	2725	2726	2727	2728	2729	2730	2731	2732	2733	2734	2735	2736	2737	2738	2739	2740	2741	2742	2743	2744	2745	2746	2747	2748	2749	2750	2751	2752	2753	2754	2755	2756	2757	2758	2759	2760	2761	2762	2763	2764	2765	2766	2767	2768	2769	2770	2771	2772	2773	2774	2775	2776	2777	2778	2779	2780	2781	2782	2783	2784	2785	2786	2787	2788	2789	2790	2791	2792	2793	2794	2795	2796	2797	2798	2799	2800	2801	2802	2803	2804	2805	2806	2807	2808	2809	2810	2811	2812	2813	2814	2815	2816	2817	2818	2819	2820	2821	2822	2823	2824	2825	2826	2827	2828	2829	2830	2831	2832	2833	2834	2835	2836	2837	2838	2839	2840	2841	2842	2843	2844	2845	2846	2847	2848	2849	2850	2851	2852	2853	2854	2855	2856	2857	2858	2859	2860	2861	2862	2863	2864	2865	2866	2867	2868	2869	2870	2871	2872	2873	2874	2875	2876	2877	2878	2879	2880	2881	2882	2883	2884	2885	2886	2887	2888	2889	2890	2891	2892	2893	2894	2895	2896	2897	2898	2899	2900	2901	2902	2903	2904	2905	2906	2907	2908	2909	2910	2911	2912	2913	2914	2915	2916	2917	2918	2919	2920	2921	2922	2923	2924	2925	2926	2927	2928	2929	2930	2931	2932	2933	2934	2935	2936	2937	2938	2939	2940	2941	2942	2943	2944	2945	2946	2947	2948	2949	2950	2951	2952	2953	2954	2955	2956	2957	2958	2959	2960	2961	2962	2963	2964	2965	2966	2967	2968	2969	2970	2971	2972	2973	2974	2975	2976	2977	2978	2979	2980	2981	2982	2983	2984	2985	2986	2987	2988	2989	2990	2991	2992	2993	2994	2995	2996	2997	2998	2999	3000	3001	3002	3003	3004	3005	3006	3007	3008	3009	3010	3011	3012	3013	3014	3015	3016	3017	3018	3019	3020	3021	3022	3023	3024	3025	3026	3027	3028	3029	3030	3031	3032	3033	3034	3035	3036	3037	3038	3039	3040	3041	3042	3043	3044	3045	3046	3047	3048	3049	3050	3051	3052	3053	3054	3055	3056	3057	3058	3059	3060	3061	3062	3063	3064	3065	3066	3067	3068	3069	3070	3071	3072	3073	3074	3075	3076	3077	3078	3079	3080	3081	3082	3083	3084	3085	3086	3087	3088	3089	3090	3091	3092	3093	3094	3095	3096	3097	3098	3099	3100	3101	3102	3103	3104	3105	3106	3107	3108	3109	3110	3111	3112	3113	3114	3115	3116	3117	3118	3119	3120	3121	3122	3123	3124	3125	3126	3127	3128	3129	3130	3131	3132	3133	3134	3135	3136	3137	3138	3139	3140	3141	3142	3143	3144	3145	3146	3147	3148	3149	3150	3151	3152	3153	3154	3155	3156	3157	3158	3159	3160	3161	3162	3163	3164	3165	3166	3167	3168	3169	3170	3171	3172	3173	3174	3175	3176	3177	3178	3179	3180	3181	3182	3183	3184	3185	3186	3187	3188	3189	3190	3191	3192	3193	3194	3195	3196	3197	3198	3199	3200	3201	3202	3203	3204	3205	3206	3207	3208	3209	3210	3211	3212	3213	3214	3215	3216	3217	3218	3219	3220	3221	3222	3223	3224	3225	3226	3227	3228	3229	3230	3231	3232	3233	3234	3235	3236	3237	3238	3239	3240	3241	3242	3243	3244	3245	3246	3247	3248	3249	3250	3251	3252	3253	3254	3255	3256	3257	3258	3259	3260	3261	3262	3263	3264	3265	3266	3267	3268	3269	3270	3271	3272	3273	3274	3275	3276	3277	3278	3279	3280	3281	3282	3283	3284	3285	3286	3287	3288	3289	3290	3291	3292	3293	3294	3295	3296	3297	3298	3299	3300	3301	3302	3303	3304	3305	3306	3307	3308	3309	3310	3311	3312	3313	3314	3315	3316	3317	3318	3319	3320	3321	3322	3323	3324	3325	3326	3327	3328	3329	3330	3331	3332	3333	3334	3335	3336	3337	3338	3339	3340	3341	3342	3343	3344	3345	3346	3347	3348	3349	3350	3351	3352	3353	3354	3355	3356	3357	3358	3359	3360	3361	3362	3363	3364	3365	3366	3367	3368	3369	3370	3371	3372	3373	337
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[illegible][illegible]

1998/99		2000/01		2001/02		2002/03		2003/04		2004/05	
High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
SHORTS (under 5 years)											
002.02	100.01	Ten 5-Y 1999	100.0000			5.30	5.51				
002.03	100.01	Ten 10-Y 1999	100.0000	-0.0000		12.50	12.50				
002.04	100.01	Ten 15-Y 1999	101.2325	-0.0227	80.37	5.12	14.27	125.04			
002.05	100.01	Ten 20-Y 1999	100.4543	-0.0000	5.49						
002.06	100.02	Ten 25-Y 1999	100.8352	-0.0000	8.90	4.90					
002.07	100.02	Ten 30-Y 1999	100.0000			6.05	4.60				
002.08	100.02	Ten 35-Y 1999	100.0000			6.05	4.60				
002.09	100.02	Ten 40-Y 1999	100.0000			6.05	4.60				
002.10	100.02	Ten 45-Y 1999	100.0000			6.05	4.60				
002.11	100.01	Ten 50-Y 1999	100.2869	-0.0730	8.23	4.60					
002.12	100.01	Ten 55-Y 1999	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
002.13	100.02	Ten 60-Y 1999	100.0000	-0.0487	8.81	4.81					
002.14	100.01	Ten 65-Y 2001	100.0000	-0.0494	6.11	4.60					
LONGS (over 15 years)											
003.01	100.01	Ten 15-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.02	100.01	Ten 20-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.03	100.01	Ten 25-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.04	100.01	Ten 30-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.05	100.01	Ten 35-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.06	100.01	Ten 40-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.07	100.01	Ten 45-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.08	100.01	Ten 50-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.09	100.01	Ten 55-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.10	100.01	Ten 60-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.11	100.01	Ten 65-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.12	100.01	Ten 70-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.13	100.01	Ten 75-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.14	100.01	Ten 80-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.15	100.01	Ten 85-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.16	100.01	Ten 90-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.17	100.01	Ten 95-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.18	100.01	Ten 100-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.19	100.01	Ten 105-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.20	100.01	Ten 110-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.21	100.01	Ten 115-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.22	100.01	Ten 120-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.23	100.01	Ten 125-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.24	100.01	Ten 130-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.25	100.01	Ten 135-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.26	100.01	Ten 140-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.27	100.01	Ten 145-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.28	100.01	Ten 150-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.29	100.01	Ten 155-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.30	100.01	Ten 160-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.31	100.01	Ten 165-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.32	100.01	Ten 170-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.33	100.01	Ten 175-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.34	100.01	Ten 180-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.35	100.01	Ten 185-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.36	100.01	Ten 190-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.37	100.01	Ten 195-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.38	100.01	Ten 200-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.39	100.01	Ten 205-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.40	100.01	Ten 210-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.41	100.01	Ten 215-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.42	100.01	Ten 220-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.43	100.01	Ten 225-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.44	100.01	Ten 230-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.45	100.01	Ten 235-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.46	100.01	Ten 240-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.47	100.01	Ten 245-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.48	100.01	Ten 250-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.49	100.01	Ten 255-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.50	100.01	Ten 260-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.51	100.01	Ten 265-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.52	100.01	Ten 270-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.53	100.01	Ten 275-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.54	100.01	Ten 280-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.55	100.01	Ten 285-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.56	100.01	Ten 290-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.57	100.01	Ten 295-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.58	100.01	Ten 300-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.59	100.01	Ten 305-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.60	100.01	Ten 310-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.61	100.01	Ten 315-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.62	100.01	Ten 320-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.63	100.01	Ten 325-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.64	100.01	Ten 330-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.65	100.01	Ten 335-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.66	100.01	Ten 340-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.67	100.01	Ten 345-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.68	100.01	Ten 350-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.69	100.01	Ten 355-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.70	100.01	Ten 360-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.71	100.01	Ten 365-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.72	100.01	Ten 370-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.73	100.01	Ten 375-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.74	100.01	Ten 380-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.75	100.01	Ten 385-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.76	100.01	Ten 390-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.77	100.01	Ten 395-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.78	100.01	Ten 400-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.79	100.01	Ten 405-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.80	100.01	Ten 410-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.81	100.01	Ten 415-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.82	100.01	Ten 420-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.83	100.01	Ten 425-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.84	100.01	Ten 430-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.85	100.01	Ten 435-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.86	100.01	Ten 440-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.87	100.01	Ten 445-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.88	100.01	Ten 450-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.89	100.01	Ten 455-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.90	100.01	Ten 460-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.91	100.01	Ten 465-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.92	100.01	Ten 470-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.93	100.01	Ten 475-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.94	100.01	Ten 480-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.95	100.01	Ten 485-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.96	100.01	Ten 490-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.97	100.01	Ten 495-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.98	100.01	Ten 500-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
003.99	100.01	Ten 505-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				
004.00	100.01	Ten 510-Y 2000	100.0000			11.73	4.60				

مكتبة ابن خلدون

Court of Appeal

Law Report February 24 1999

Court of Appeal

Controlling shareholder can be employee

Secretary of State for Trade and Industry v Bottrill
Before Lord Woolf, Master of the Rolls, Lord Justice Peter Gibson and Lord Justice Mummery
[Judgment February 12]

A controlling shareholder of a company could also be an employee of that company who was entitled under the Employment Rights Act 1996 to recover from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry money owed by the company when it became insolvent.

The Court of Appeal so held in a reserved judgment dismissing the appeal of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry against the decision of the Employment Appeal Tribunal (Mr A. C. Blythson and Mrs R. Chapman) ([1998] ICR 564) to uphold the decision of the Industrial Tribunal that Mr Peter Bottrill was entitled to claim a payment from the Secretary of State under section 184 of the 1996 Act.

Ms Jennifer Eady for the Secretary of State, Mr Martyn Barkley for Mr Bottrill.

THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS, giving the judgment of the court, said that whether a person who was a controlling shareholder of a company could also be an employee of that company for the purposes of the 1996 Act was an issue on which there had been conflicting previous decisions.

In *Buchan v Secretary of State for Employment* ([1997] IRLR 80) the Employment Appeal Tribunal had decided that a controlling shareholder could not be an employee for that purpose.

In *Fleming v Secretary of State for Trade and Industry* ([1997] IRLR 682) the Inner House of the Court of Session did not apply *Buchan* and had decided that a controlling shareholder could be an employee.

Whether he was an employee or not depended on all the circum-

stances. A similar view had been taken by the appeal tribunal in the present case.

The significance of the issue was that if the controlling shareholder was an employee, then upon any of the conditions specified in section 166(7) being satisfied, broadly speaking on insolvency, as an employee, the controlling shareholder was entitled to recover certain sums, which would otherwise be owing from the company, from the Secretary of State in accordance with the provisions of the Act, including statutory redundancy payments (section 166), unpaid wages and holiday pay and moneys in lieu of notice, the basic award of compensation in respect of unfair dismissal and other payments, including protective awards, and moneys due for time taken off work for trade union duties, etc (section 184).

Mr Bottrill had become managing director of Magnatech UK Ltd in 1994. There had been one other director and two other individuals had been employees.

The one share of the company which was issued had been held by Mr Bottrill. It had, however, been intended in the future that an American group, which supplied Magnatech with all its raw materials, would hold 80 per cent of the shares in the company.

A draft shareholders' agreement describing the proposed relationship between the group and Magnatech had been prepared.

However, before the agreement was executed, Magnatech had become insolvent. At that time Mr Bottrill was still the sole shareholder. A receiver had been appointed. Mr Bottrill had become redundant and had been dismissed.

The industrial tribunal, in concluding that Mr Bottrill had been an employee, had relied on its findings that Mr Bottrill's status as sole shareholder had only been temporary and any control which he had had of the company was

only theoretical. The actual control had been held by the American group.

The tribunal had laid stress on the fact that Mr Bottrill had paid national insurance contributions and tax as if he was an employee, had been entitled to sick pay, worked fixed hours and had a contract with Magnatech that was described as a contract of employment.

Having considered *Fleming* and *Buchan*, the court had concluded that, of the two approaches, it had no hesitation in preferring the approach in *Fleming*.

As the court understood the reasoning in *Buchan*, it was the ability of the shareholder to prevent his dismissal which was crucial and that in turn depended on his ability to use his voting rights to that end.

But shareholders in general did not have the right to interfere with management decisions save pursuant to resolutions passed in general meeting. But then the dismissal might have occurred.

The gloss sought to be given to "employee" in the Act, based as it was on the ability of the controlling shareholder to prevent his dismissal, was all the more surprising when applied to a case such as the present when Mr Bottrill had been powerless to prevent his actual dismissal which triggered his claim.

The court recognised the attractions of having in relation to the Act a simple and clear test which would determine whether a shareholder or a director was an employee for the purposes of the Act or not. However, the Act did not provide such a test and it was far from obvious what Parliament would have intended the test to be.

The court did not find any justification for departing from the well established position in the law of employment generally. That was whether or not an employer/employee relationship existed could be decided only by having regard to all the relevant facts.

If an individual had a controlling shareholding, that was certainly a fact which was likely to be significant in all situations and in some cases it might prove to be decisive.

However, it was only one of the factors which were relevant and certainly was not to be taken as determinative without considering all the relevant circumstances.

Both *Fleming* and the appeal tribunal in the present case had made it clear that the scope for abuse was limited. The court would reaffirm their view as to the use of devices to seek remedies against the Secretary of State in inappropriate circumstances.

However, those cases apart, it was right to note that, in a case such as the present where national insurance contributions had been paid, to deprive an individual of his claims under the Act could be to deprive unjustly that individual of the benefits to which he could properly expect to be entitled after he and his "employer" had made the appropriate contributions.

The industrial tribunal had been entitled to conclude that there had been a genuine contractual relationship between Mr Bottrill and his company and, having carefully and properly weighed the competing factors, it had arrived at a conclusion which was unimpeachable on the facts.

The Secretary of State had expressly accepted that if he was wrong in supporting the approach in law in *Buchan*, the appeal had to be dismissed. He had asked the court to provide what guidance it could because of the frequency with which problems of the type exemplified by the present case arose.

The court was anxious not to lay down rigid guidelines for the inquiry which the tribunal of fact had to undertake in the particular circumstances of each case, but the court hoped that the following comments might be of assistance.

The first question which the tribunal was likely to wish to consider was whether there was or had been a genuine contract between the company and the shareholder.

In that context how and for what reasons the contract had come into existence, for example, whether the contract was made at a time when insolvency loomed, and what each party actually did pursuant to the contract were likely to be relevant considerations.

If the tribunal concluded that the contract was not a sham, it was likely to wish to consider next whether the contract, which might well have been labelled a contract of employment, actually gave rise to an employer/employee relationship.

In that context, of the various factors usually regarded as relevant, the degree of control exercised by the company over the shareholder employee was always important. That was not the same question as that relating to whether there was a controlling shareholding.

The tribunal might think it appropriate to consider whether there were directors other than or in addition to the shareholder employee and whether the constitution of the company gave that shareholder rights such that he was in reality answerable only to himself and incapable of being dismissed.

It was a director, it might be relevant to consider whether he was able under the articles of association to vote on matters in which he was personally interested, such as the termination of his contract of employment. Again, the actual conduct of the parties pursuant to the terms of the contract was likely to be relevant.

It was for the tribunal as an industrial jury to take all relevant factors into account in reaching its conclusion, giving such weight to them as it considered appropriate.

Solicitors: Treasury Solicitor; Shumans, Leeds.

O'Mahoney v Joffe and Another

Before Lord Justice Simon Brown, Lord Justice Ward and Lord Justice Robert Walker
[Judgment February 15]

A pillion passenger who knew the motorcycle driver was uninsured and who had agreed on a joint venture to go for a drive for the thrill of the drive itself was "a person using the vehicle" within the meaning of clause 6(1)(d) of the Motor Insurers' Bureau (Compensation of Victims of Uninsured Drivers) Agreement (1972) and could not claim compensation from the bureau.

The Court of Appeal so held in a reserved judgment in allowing an appeal by the second defendant, the Motor Insurers' Bureau (MIB), against the decision of Mr Justice Bell in the Queen's Bench Division at Bristol on February 10, 1998 that the MIB was liable for damages, to be assessed for an accident in which the plaintiff, Lucy Maria Goretti O'Mahoney, was injured by the first defendant, Thomas Anthony Joffe, who was uninsured.

Clause 6 of the 1972 agreement provides: "(1) MIB shall not incur any liability under this agreement in a case where: (a) at the time of the accident the persons suffering... bodily injury in respect of which the claim is made was allowing himself to be carried in a vehicle and... (b) ... being a person using the vehicle... without there being in force... a contract of insurance."

Mr Desmond O'Brien and Mr Bradley Martin for the MIB; Mr Richard Methuen, QC and Mr Brian Gallagher for the plaintiff.

LORD JUSTICE SIMON BROWN said that the plaintiff was seriously injured in an accident when she had been pillion on the first defendant's motorcycle when he lost control and crashed.

The judge held that as between the plaintiff and first defendant the latter was wholly to blame and ordered him to pay 100 per cent of the plaintiff's damages to be assessed.

The first defendant was, however, uninsured and hence the involvement of the MIB. The MIB counterclaimed for a declaration that they were exempt from any liability to the plaintiff under clause 6(1)(d) of the 1972 agreement.

The judge found that the plaintiff knew there was no contract of insurance in force. He concluded, however, that at the time of the accident the plaintiff was not "a person using the vehicle" so that the MIB was not exempt from liability under clause 6. The correctness of

that conclusion was the single issue raised on the appeal.

At the time of the accident, the plaintiff was 20 and the defendant 18. The defendant lived with his mother. The plaintiff came from Ireland and was travelling with the defendant's cousin. The two girls came to stay at the defendant's house.

The defendant was mostly unemployed and spent much of his time working on motorcycles. The one which he crashed he had bought a few months earlier for £10. By the time of the accident, work on the bike was virtually finished.

On a number of occasions the defendant's mother had told the defendant, his cousin and the plaintiff not to go out on the bike. She had specifically reminded them that there was no tax, no MOT, no insurance and no driving licence and also warned them of its condition.

The judge referred to *Stinton v Stinton* ([1997] RTR 167), *Flatten v Hall* ([1997] RTR 212), *Brown v Roberts* ([1995] 1 QB 1), *Leathley v Taton* ([1980] RTR 21) and *B (a Minor) v Knight* ([1991] RTR 136).

The central principles which could be derived from those cases were as follows: 1 "Using" in clause 6 bore the same meaning as in the road traffic Acts, now the 1988 Act, so that a user was by definition someone required to provide third party cover and, if he failed to do so, was potentially liable both criminally and civilly. "User" therefore had a restricted meaning.

2 Not all passengers were users even when they knew that the vehicle was being driven without insurance.

3 There had to be present in the putative user some element of controlling, managing or operating the vehicle.

4 That element could exist as a result of a joint venture to use the vehicle for a particular purpose or where the passenger procured the making of the journey.

5 Not every such joint venture or procurement, however, would involve the element of control or management necessary to constitute the passenger as a user.

6 Whether in any given case there was a sufficient element of control or management to constitute the passenger a user was a question of fact and degree for the trial judge.

In his Lordship's judgment this was in the very fullest sense a joint enterprise. It was not merely an agreement to travel somewhere in the uninsured vehicle, as in *Flatten v Hall*.

This case was a *furiori* to *Stin-*

ton v Stinton. Here, unlike there, the actual riding of the vehicle was an integral part of the thrill of the venture. Here, unlike there, the judge felt able to make a positive finding that at one point during the outing the plaintiff herself actually rode the bike.

In his Lordship's judgment it was unreal and impermissible to hold, as effectively the judge did, that a party to such a venture could, so to speak, slip into and out of the status of vehicle user.

Given, as inevitably, he held, that the plaintiff was using the bike while herself riding it, given, as he could not but have held, he had specifically addressed the question, that the plaintiff was using the bike at the outset when she helped bump start it; and given her equal participation throughout in the central purpose of the venture, his Lordship could not accept that a point ever arrived at which the judge could properly hold that her involvement was spent and the level of her control, management or operation of the bike fell short of that necessary to constitute her as a user.

While the mere fact of knowledge of the uninsured use of the vehicle was not of itself sufficient to constitute the passenger as a user, where the whole venture evolved as one of flagrant criminality, that consideration coloured its essential nature and enabled it more properly to be characterised as one involving "user" of the vehicle on the part of all those fully participating.

That view carried with it the following conclusion: that passengers who had no reason to suppose that a vehicle's use was uninsured or otherwise unlawful were less likely than those like the plaintiff to be found users of it with all the adverse criminal and civil consequences which such a finding entailed.

The present MIB agreement, which came into force on December 31, 1988 no longer required the MIB to establish user in addition to knowledge of no insurance as a condition of exemption from liability. Had, therefore, the plaintiff suffered her accident just five months later, her claim would have failed.

Nevertheless, ten years on there remained a number of cases like hers awaiting final determination. The present appeal was therefore clearly of importance not merely to the plaintiff but to others too.

LORD JUSTICE WARD delivered a concurring judgment and Lord Justice Robert Walker agreed.

Solicitors: Palmer Grossman, Southampton; Lamport Bassett, Southampton.

Knowledge of sex offer required for conviction

Westminster City Council v Blenheim Leisure (Restaurants) Ltd and Others

Before Lord Justice Brooke, Mr Justice Tucker and Mr Justice Forbes
[Judgment February 12]

In order to establish whether offers of sexual services for reward constituted a failure on behalf of a licensee to maintain good order in the premises, it was necessary for the licensee to have knowledge of the offers made.

The Queen's Bench Divisional Court so held in dismissing an appeal, by way of case stated, by Westminster City Council, against the decision of the Geoffrey Brain Breen, Metropolitan Magistrate, sitting at Horseferry Road Magistrates Court on information laid against Blenheim Leisure (Restaurants) Ltd, Simon Phillipinger and Giorgio Giuseppe Luigi Cura, that offers

to provide sexual services for reward, made by various females to police officers, did not constitute a failure by the licensee to maintain good order in the premises under rule 9 of Westminster City Council's Rules of Management for Places of Public Entertainment, incorporated under paragraph (1) of Schedule 12 to the London Government Act 1963, as amended by the Local Government Act 1985.

The magistrate had convicted the licensee of breaches of rule 4 of those rules.

Mr Jeremy Carter-Manning, QC and Mr Mark Bryant-Heron for Westminster; Mr Ian Glen, QC and Miss Susanna Fitzgerald for the appellants.

MR JUSTICE TUCKER said that in deciding whether the behaviour of female dancers in the appellants' clubs was in breach of rule 9 it was necessary to consider whether

their activities amounted to acts of prostitution. In their Lordships' opinion they did: see *R v McFarlane* ([1994] QB 419, 424).

In deciding whether the offers made by the females, having been made discreetly to an individual without being overheard or anyone else being aware of such offers, could properly be said to amount to a failure on the part of the licensee to maintain good order in the premises, what mattered was whether the licensee was aware of those activities.

It was in his Lordship's opinion immaterial whether anyone else overheard what was being offered, or was aware of it: see *R v Tins* ([1983] QB 1053, 1059).

Provided that it could be established in each case that the licensee in question was aware of those practices, so that it could be said that he permitted them to take place, his Lordship of the opinion

that the offence would be made out.

To allow acts of prostitution to take place on the premises would amount to a failure to maintain good order in the premises. It was not necessary to show conduct which would amount to a public order breach of the peace, or to show that the conduct was rowdy.

The statutory provisions or the rules did not create offences of strict liability. It was necessary to establish mens rea and therefore knowledge on the part of the licensee.

Since the magistrate expressly found that no one else, including, it must be assumed, the licensee, was aware of what was being offered, his Lordship did not see how it could be said that any breach of the rule had occurred. Accordingly, the magistrate was right in law. Mr Justice Forbes agreed.

LORD JUSTICE BROOKE,

agreeing, added that the council would do well to tighten up the law of rule 9 if it wished to be able to use it to prohibit such activities on licensed premises after the Human Rights Act 1998 comes into force, since the application of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1953, Cmd 8969) would have the effect of prescribing that a criminal offence must be clearly defined.

Solicitors: Mr Colin Wilson, Westminster; Jeffrey Green Russell.

Price not misleading when published

Thomson Tour Operations Ltd v Birch

Before Lord Justice Brooke and Mr Justice Forbes
[Judgment January 26]

Section 20(1) of the Consumer Protection Act 1987 created criminal liability for indications of price which were misleading at the time they were made, and not indications of price which subsequently became misleading.

The Queen's Bench Divisional Court so held in allowing an appeal by Thomson Tour Operations Ltd, by way of case stated, against their conviction by Redditch Justices on May 22, 1998, that they had given an indication to Alison Lee Baxter that was misleading as an indication as to price in November 1996, and was subsequently shown to be misleading when tested in February 1997 contrary to section 20(1) of the 1987 Act.

The information was preferred by Stephen William Birch on behalf of Hereford and Worcester County Council.

Thomson's Fair Trading Charter published in their holiday brochure (second edition, April-October 1997) stated: "...our early price promise means that if we reduce the total price of a holiday, after you have booked it, we will charge the new lower price."

Section 20 of the 1987 Act provides: "(1) ... a person shall be guilty of an offence if, in the course of any business of his, he gives (by any means whatever) to any consumer an indication which is misleading as to the price at which any goods, services, accommodation or facilities are available."

Section 21 provides: "(1) For the purposes of section 20 above an indication given to any consumers is

misleading as to a price if what is conveyed by the indication, or what those consumers might reasonably be expected to infer from the indication or any omission from it, includes the following: (a) that a person who in fact has no such expectation (i) expects the price to be increased or reduced ... or (ii) expects the price, or the price as increased or reduced to be maintained."

Mr Raymond Walker, QC, Mr Philip Galloway Cooper and Mr Stephen Mason for Thomson; Mr Andrew Wallace for the prosecution.

MR JUSTICE FORBES said that after booking her holiday Mrs Baxter found that her friend, Mrs Paula Anderson, had booked the same holiday from Thomson, having accepted an offer of a 10 per cent discount.

Mrs Baxter wrote to Thomson's sales manager in Birmingham, who refused to reduce the price of the holiday to match the discount offered to Mrs Anderson. She then wrote to Thomson's head office, and in the meantime paid the balance due.

The head office later refunded Mrs Baxter an amount equivalent to a 10 per cent discount.

His Lordship said that under section 20(1) of the 1987 Act, the person who was alleged to have no such expectation was Thomson. Under that section the prosecution was required to prove conjunctively (i) that the price had been reduced; and (ii) that Thomson had indicated to Mrs Baxter that they expected the price of the holiday to be reduced; and at the time that indication was given they did not expect the price of the holiday to be reduced.

The early price promise referred

to the possibility of a decrease in the price of the holiday, at some time after it had been booked.

Section 20(1) was expressed in the present tense not in the future tense and it created criminal liability for indications of price which were misleading at the time made and did not extend to the price later.

Parliament did have in mind the possibility of an indication of price which, after it was given, had become misleading since that was specifically provided for in section 20(2).

The words of the charter did not express an expectation on the part of Thomson that the price was to be increased or reduced. It could not be said that Thomson anticipat-


ed any decrease in the price of the holiday. The justices should have acquitted Thomson.

LORD JUSTICE BROOKE, agreeing, added that when the brochure was published Thomson in effect told customers that if the price went down they would charge a lower price. On the facts of this case they should have done, otherwise Mrs Baxter would be able to claim damages for breach of warranty.

But at the time they did not expect the price to go down. That would depend on the markets and there was no evidence before the justices that they would expect it to go down.

Solicitors: Mason Bond; Mr Simon Mallinson, Worcester.

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Court cannot release cash to fund case

Commissioners of Customs and Excise v Harris (Stephen David)

Before Lord Justice Brooke and Mr Justice Forbes
[Judgment January 29]

Where cash had been seized under section 42 of the Drug Trafficking Act 1994, but forfeiture had not yet been ordered, a magistrates court did not have any jurisdiction to direct the release of cash for the purposes of funding legal proceedings under the Act.

The Queen's Bench Divisional Court so held in allowing an appeal by the Commissioners of Customs and Excise by way of case stated against the decision of Uxbridge Justices on July 21, 1998 to allow Stephen David Harris legal expenses from seized cash.

Mr Harris had been preparing to board a flight to Colombia from Heathrow airport when he was found to be carrying US\$95,000. Mr Harris's account of the origin and purpose of the cash was considered unsatisfactory.

On April 21, 1998 the cash was seized. On April 23, an application for the continued detention of the seized cash was heard by Uxbridge Justices who granted a further de-

tenation of three months. On July 21, 1998, the court granted a further application for the detention of the seized cash for another three months. It also granted Mr Harris his legal expenses for defending the application and that was to be paid from the detained cash held by the commissioners.

Mr Andrew Bird for the commissioners; Mr Joel Clompass for Mr Harris.

MR JUSTICE FORBES said that there was no ambiguity or uncertainty in the statutory provisions in question, and the court did not need to have regard to the European Convention on Human Rights (1953, Cmd 8969).

His Lordship was satisfied that there was no proper basis for extending to magistrates a power to make any order for the release of any cash in the absence of any specific power to make such an order. Magistrates courts and their powers were defined and limited by statute. It was wrong to imply a power where none existed.

LORD JUSTICE BROOKE agreed. Solicitors: Solicitor, Customs and Excise; Saunders & Co.

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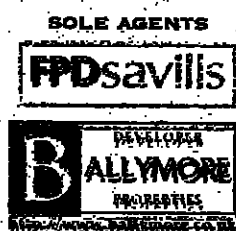
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Jeff Duggan, the managing director of Grove Manor Homes, says: "We wanted to do something differ-

About a year ago, Mr Roberts made a 2ft model so that the company could photograph it for marketing purposes and display it in the sales of-

Angela South, the sales and marketing director of Nicholson Estates.

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But the case may not have laid the issue entirely to rest. Judge Stretton said that "there is no acceptable evidence that this house . . . has ever been the subject of a supernatural visitation", but he came to no verdict on the reality of hauntings in general.

If you mention ghosts to estate agents, they often clam up. Haunted houses are a thorny issue for agents, who are understandably wary of becoming a laughing stock.

Hugh Dunsford-Hardy of the National Association of Estate Agents, says: "You're not going to mention anything to a detached house collector."

According to one report, the "haunted house" at Upper Mayfield rose above its pre-ghost value once the judge had ruled.

DAVID FICKLING

[illegible]



DANCE

THE TIMES ARTS

VISUAL ART



Into his leap of honour

DANCE: Will Irek Mukhamedov's Don Juan presage his withdrawal from the stage? Interview by Allen Robertson

Today we are all warned not to expect a job for life. But dancers have known this all along. They understand that the physical demands of their trade mean they will be quitting the limelight at the very point when other professionals hit their stride.

Irek Mukhamedov turns 39 next week. Yet, far from heading for the scrapheap, the Russian ballet star is about to be handed that most coveted of all dance trophies: a new full-length role created for him. Starting at Sadler's Wells on Monday, Mukhamedov will be playing the title character in *The Return of Don Juan* for Arc Dance Company. The gusto of his performance looks set to dispel the doomday prophecies of a career in decline.

"I still dance 200 per cent every time," Mukhamedov insists. "Ballet is always young, but I have experience. I've been on stage for 20 years."

According to the choreographer Kim Brandstrup, the creative inspiration behind this new *Don Juan* is Mukhamedov's own talent. A comedy set in a modern film studio, it has a plot loosely based on a Danish radio play from the 1930s. That sparked off a similarly obscure Ingmar Bergman opus, *The Devil's Eye* (1960). *Don Juan*, briefly let out of Hell, sets his sights on a virginal ingenue, "the only girl of unassailable virtue left in the world". In trying to seduce her, the Don makes the calamitous mistake of falling in love for the first (and last) time. It is a perfect role for

Mukhamedov. Not only does he radiate masculine sexuality on stage, he also has an impish flair for comedy. "It is comic," he says, "but I hope the audience will cry a little bit too."

This is Mukhamedov's second created role for Arc: in 1994 he starred in Brandstrup's version of *Orlando*. In the interim, Brandstrup has

'The Royal Ballet survived without Rudolf Nureyev. It will survive without me'

choreographed for several big classical ballet companies, including the Royal Danish. Mukhamedov feels that this has helped Brandstrup's style to grow. "I wish I could be a choreographer," the Russian dancer says, "but I know it is impossible. When I try to choreograph I get a headache. So when someone makes a ballet for me, I feel honoured."

A young superstar with the Bolshoi Ballet, lauded for his dynamism in blockbusters such as *Spartacus* and *Ivan the Terrible*, Mukhamedov and his second wife left Moscow for London nine years ago. He joined the Royal Ballet, where he has been ever since. The choreographer Kenneth MacMillan doted on his

talents. No one so dramatically evoked the torment of Crown Prince Rudolf in *Mayerring*, the ballet Mukhamedov was dancing that night in 1992 when MacMillan died backstage. It was a blow for Mukhamedov. The dancer believes that he and the Royal's chief choreographer were forming a great partnership.

Today his future is in flux. From this season he is a guest with the Royal Ballet rather than a full-time member, and Mukhamedov feels that Covent Garden has cut him adrift. "I'm a dancer who needs to be a part of a company. To be a guest is to be on the outside. But the Royal Ballet will survive. It survived without Rudolf Nureyev. It will survive without Irek Mukhamedov."

His immediate future includes guest appearances in Japan, Russia and Germany. He and Anthony Dowell, the Royal Ballet's artistic director, have also worked out what he will be dancing (as a guest) once the company is back at Covent Garden next season. "I would like to dance as much as I can, as long as possible."

Away from the dance world he has the bedrock of his wife and two children, now eight and three. "When we finish talking now I will fly back to them in Bedfordshire. They will still be there when it is time to give up dancing, maybe sooner than I think. Who knows? I love driving. Maybe I could be a cabbie."

● *The Return of Don Juan* is at Sadler's Wells (0171-963 8000) from Monday to Wednesday, then tours nationally until April 16



Super trouper: at 39, Irek Mukhamedov still gives all his dancing "200 per cent"

No sex means no cigar

One way or another, it all comes down to sex. Without it, *Carmen* would be nothing but a common factory worker; without it, José would still be on the right side of the law and Micaela would be a happily married woman. And without it, we would not have our story. Didi Veldman's new ballet for Northern Ballet Theatre, unveiled at the Grand Theatre in Leeds on Monday, knows this. But somehow her *Carmen* cannot quite bring itself to express this fundamental truth.

And yet virtually everything else about Veldman's production (sponsored by Halifax plc) is in place. The staging is excellent — the story is told lucidly and quickly with a strong sense of purpose. The scenario, devised by the late Christopher Gable, reimagines the tale, setting it in contemporary Rio de Janeiro, and that works just fine. The designs, by the inestimable Lex Brotherston, capture the inner-city malaise of an industrial wasteland blighted by poverty and despair. The Bizet score, arranged by John Longstaff, is enthusiastically played by John Pryce-Jones and the Northern Ballet Theatre Orchestra. And Patricia Doyle's direction ensures excellent performances from a uniformly accomplished cast.

No, the problem is the choreography which, despite its plain-spoken energy, does not show us a full-blooded tale of fatal attraction. Veldman's strength is in her writing for the ensemble. She animates the stage in well-defined social observation: the gangsters and crooks have a restless bravado; the factory girls are trapped by boredom and futility; the police officers evince a wooden devotion to duty.

When the opportunity arises to have some fun, Veldman takes it. She enjoys reinventing Escamillo as a rock star, and getting raunchy as the tormented song is subjected to the full synthesized rock treat-

ment. Some of her vignettes are juicy, such as the robbery of two tourists by Carmen's gang, and Veldman responds well to the coarseness of Carmen's society, making clear that almost everything in it has its price. But the unisex democracy of the choreography works against Veldman when it comes to focusing on soloists. She doesn't have the language to make them special. She never fully establishes



Daniel de Andrade (José), Charlotte Broom (Carmen)

the overpowering physical connection between Charlotte Broom's Carmen and Daniel de Andrade's José, so that when their final confrontation arrives, it comes almost as a dramatic non sequitur. The awkward and evasive consummation scene in Carmen's bedroom is far from sizzling and Veldman seems so intent on portraying Carmen as a tomboy that poor Broom seems stuck in a perpetual adolescence. Broom is an impressive dance-actress, but if the body language of the ballet is not screaming adult sexual allure, what is her Carmen to do?

DEBRA CRAINE

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CHANGING TIMES

Bombast without bite

London has heard some fine performances of Mahler's mighty *Resurrection Symphony* recently, but none perhaps as overtly impressive as this account by Myung-Whun Chung with the London Symphony Orchestra. A packed Barbican Hall added to the sense of occasion, and with its concentration, vividness of orchestral playing and remarkably controlled singing it added up to something quite

CONCERTS

special. But ultimately this huge impression was not enough, and the performance's failure to be truly stirring pointed up the pitfalls of playing Mahler.

Youthful fling on the wild side

A TIME there was when Thomas Adès was only a pianist: a BBC Young Musician finalist, a career as a soloist certainly beckoned. But that would have limited him, so he became a composer, and developed, in rapid succession, parallel careers as a conductor and artistic director. Still in his twenties, he has been appointed artistic advisor to the Aldeburgh Festival. And as if to underscore his credentials as heir to the Britten legacy came this Wigmore concert of classical chamber music.

The comparison may be pertinent. Britten was an exceptional pianist, but especially an exceptional accompanist. Beethoven's vast, soul-searching *Ghost Trio* requires something more than musicianly genius. Of course, Adès has this in spades: he cannot fail to be interesting, and his piano playing has the inner conviction and understanding of the composer-pianist. He is so interesting, in fact, that Mitsuko Uchida herself came to hear him. But what must she, a pianist with a capital P, have made of it? From the blizzard of notes in the rushed opening Adès led an exciting but hare-brained performance.

Admittedly, the excellent violinist Anthony Marwood — who would have given that vital shape to the ensemble — had flu, and was replaced by the fluent but often superficial Alexander Janacek. As Adès blazed forward, only cellist Louise Hopkins appeared to be trying to salvage an interpretation dragging them back in the Largo to make space for what should be hard-won cresc-

endos. Under Adès's hands the great descending scales disappeared in a wash of pedal, only to rear up suddenly accented at the finish.

More successful was the arresting Haydn E major Trio, FKV23. Here Adès could lead, and the ensemble followed. The intriguing opening in which pizzicato notes pin down the wings of spread piano chords had hints of transparency, though Adès lent high camp to the mock-Bartók Allegretto.

Marwood was too ill to play Bartók's *Contrasts* but rose heroically to a witty piece of Adès juvenilia, *Catch* (1991). This charming musical conceit casts the clarinetist (the fine Lynsey Marsh) as outsider, who must wander in and out looking for a way into a composition that fizzes like the unwinding of clockwork toys. She is finally forgiven with an alluring lyric finale.

Another piece of theatre, Adès's *Life Story* (1994), on a droll tract of Tennessee Williams about one-night stands, strains to be a louche cabaret number (the ghost of Britten again) but really needs an untrained voice. Although Mary Carewe injected a degree of intimacy, this is a laboured setting over its asymmetric bass rumblings. Adès has moved on since, but a packed house lapped it up.

HELEN WALLACE

Masterpieces of this size are open to many different interpretations, but this one, coming at the end of the LSO education programme's enterprising *Discovery Day*, was a little too indulgent. Mahler is at least partly about luxurious sound, intricate detail and vulgar bombast, and Chung, conducting from memory, conjured up all these with a sure hand. Yet he missed the work's more severe and unsettling side.

Even at the slow tempos he adopted, Chung's pacing was secure. He shaped the work's biggest span, the death-immortal idea that arches over the entire work, with a certainty that disguised the symphony's fragmented gestation.

With its bristling tension, the opening promised much: as the movement developed a sense of both serenity and epic grandeur, all seemed to be in place for a compelling interpretation. But then Chung's relaxed speeds began to take their toll, and this funeral march became more funeral than march-like, hardly the *Allegro maestoso* that Mahler called for.

The dreamily escapist second movement, evoking the memory of a distant dance, turned out to be a slow-motion tour of a peasant hop with all the tilt of the *Ländler* rhythms filtered out. The grim reality of the third movement was not really frightful enough, as the music's sardonic edge was softened by all too moderate tempos.

Strong vocal contributions put the performance back on course, especially the unearthly disembodied entry of the Venetian Sara Mingardo in *Urlicht*. A true contralto, not a moonlighting mezzo, she sang with the glow of molten metal, and phrased seamlessly.

After an unsettled start, the Slovakian soprano Andrea Dankova also sang radiantly, showing off a small but glamorous voice. And the London Symphony Chorus, hushed at first and later full-throated, was on splendid form in the finale, which Chung controlled masterfully. The conductor's theatrical instinct showed in the way he steered it from the explosion of sound at the bursting of the graves towards an overwhelming climax.

JOHN ALLISON

Riding on the rhythm

DAVID MURRAY's recent projects have included everything from a collaboration with Senegalese musicians to an album celebrating his predilection for jamming with the Grateful Dead, so his Creole band, embracing the music of Guadeloupe, barely raises an eyebrow. Just two of the islands' percussionists, *ka drummers* François Landresseau and Klod Klavue on *ka drum* and congas, were actually present for this one-off appearance, but the American saxophonist let their playing form the basis of what he and his jazz-orientated colleagues played, rather than using it for a splash of rhythmic embellishment.

Klavue, indeed, provided Gédé, a rousingly percussive

opener with a rolling rhythm over which Murray, on tenor, and flautist James Newton played an infectious theme. Pheeroan akLaff kept asserting the springy Caribbean rhythm while maintaining the supple looseness conducive to jazz improvisation. Throughout, both he and bassist Santi Debrano fulfilled this role with great aplomb, pounding out lively, dancing rhythms that could be embroidered by the two hand-drummers and, simultaneously, provide a platform for Murray's multi-textured saxophone and Newton's neat yet intense flute.

Even the introduction of Guy Konkret did not faze the rhythm section. Konkret used his forceful baritone to great effect, chanting and declaiming over the chattering percussion and blending his voice, call-and-response style, with both Murray and Newton. Whether he or Landresseau was singing, Murray's musical instincts ensured that the free adventurousness of the jazz element was allowed to flourish in this unusual setting.

CHRIS PARKER

مكتبة الامن الوطني

PARIS GALLERIES

The genius of Rothko

ARTS

LONDON GALLERIES
Russian curiosities

Long, dazed journey into night

VISUAL ART:

Richard Cork
on important
Paris shows
devoted to the
genius of Rothko
and Hockney

Only a year before he committed suicide in 1970, Mark Rothko made the Tate Gallery an exceptionally handsome gift of nine major paintings. Apart from reflecting his love of Turner's most sublime work, the donation conveyed Rothko's gratitude to a country where his art had already enjoyed warm admiration. Now, however, the great Rothko retrospective already shown in Washington and New York has bypassed London and ends its tour in Paris. So British devotees of Rothko's luminous, transcendent vision must make a pilgrimage to the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville, where long queues brave the winter winds to pay homage to a master of Modernism.

To judge by the awed faces at the exhibition, visitors find Rothko well worth the wait. I would go further. This is an exceptionally moving show, installed with lucid simplicity and select enough to avoid the risk of lapsing into monotony. Rothko's output was immense, and a large survey might easily make him look repetitive. Here, however, the organisers stop well short of overkill. And they are not afraid of revealing how long he took to discover his identity as an artist.

Emigrating from his native Russia at the age of nine, the young Marcus Rothkowitz had good reason to feel insecure. His father died in 1914, only two years after the family settled in Portland, Oregon. To help to overcome the ensuing hardship, Rothko was obliged to sell newspapers in the street. It was a miracle that he did well enough at school to win a bursary to Yale University, but no surprise that he left before obtaining a degree. Already prey to the highly strung temperament that plagued him throughout life, he studied painting in New York instead.

Rothko struggled for the next two decades to find his voice. A forlorn series of Manhattan subway paintings, each stressing urban alienation, indicate just how isolated he must have felt. Only with hindsight can we see how the stark, planar organisation of these subterranean images prophesies the structure he would favour in his mature work.

After 1940, when he began to exhibit under the name of Rothko, a new feeling of solidarity emerged in the New York avant-garde. He met Clifford Still and Jackson Pollock, who shared his desire for extreme renewal. But the paintings he produced in the war years, riddled with mythological references and titles as mysterious as *The Omen of the Eagle*, seem fussy and starved of the epic, sensuous vision he would discover later.

The true breakthrough occurred only around 1948, when Rothko realised that he should discard all his unwieldy and obscure references to the past. Concentrating now on a few elements only, and unafraid to purge his canvases of all irrelevant details, he gradually discovered how to let bands, lozenges and strips of smouldering colour float on the picture surface. His brushwork became blurred, allowing his pigment to glow as vaporous as a cloud. And each component, whether as thin as a line or as looming as a land-mass, is allowed space to assert its own character.

From 1950 until his tragic death,

Rothko's art is essentially abstract. But we cannot help seeing in these great veils of orange, red, black, yellow or maroon a host of possible references to the visible world. The division between one element and its neighbour often resembles a horizon. We feel alone in the immensity of a bare landscape, gazing towards a sky suffused with the last, brilliant flare of waning light. Windows are evoked as well, capacious enough to encompass the vastness of an elemental view beyond.

No figures can be detected in Rothko's mature work, but it never feels impersonal. Even at their largest and most enveloping, his paintings seem surprisingly intimate. They relate very directly to our own experience of the world, although

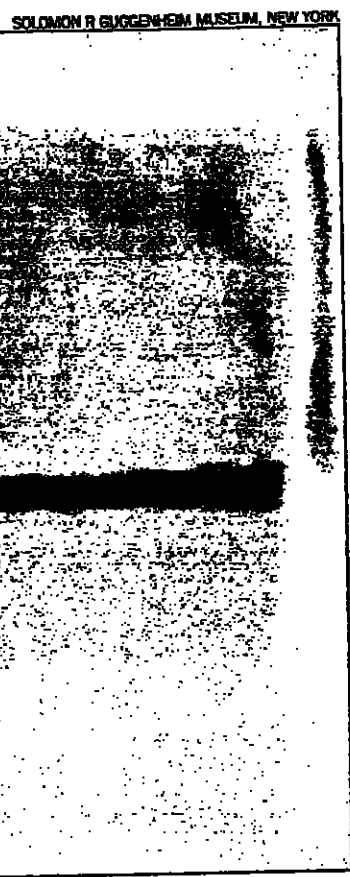
Rothko constantly succeeds in conveying a sense of cosmic, unfathomable strangeness.

The depression that finally overwhelmed him is disclosed with terrifying candour in the last room. Restricted now to a dour combination of black and muddy grey or brown, Rothko confronts utter negation. Darkness has descended, seemingly for ever. He could find no pathway out of the gloom, and the final

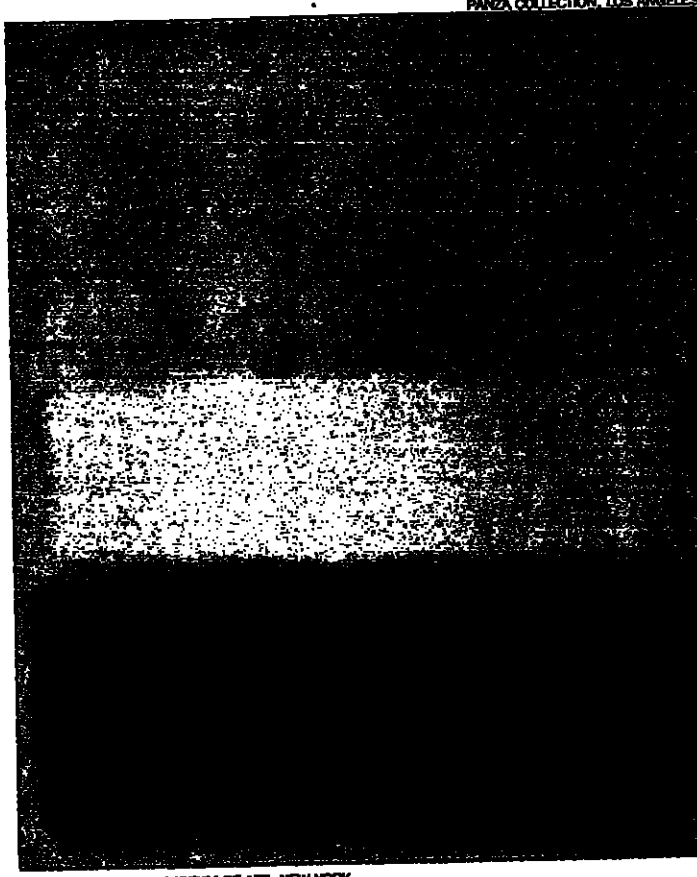
paintings are pitifully demoralised. Their pessimism is all the more shocking when compared with the boundless aspiration of the paintings he produced at his zenith.

After this, it is a relief to find David Hockney: *Space/Landscape* at the Pompidou Centre. Displayed in temporary rooms, while most of the building is closed for extensive renovation, the survey commences with a witty 1962 painting. Here a demonic young Hockney and his friends refuse to look out of the car window as they race crazily through Switzerland en route to Florence. Since then, though, he has stared at his surroundings more and more intently.

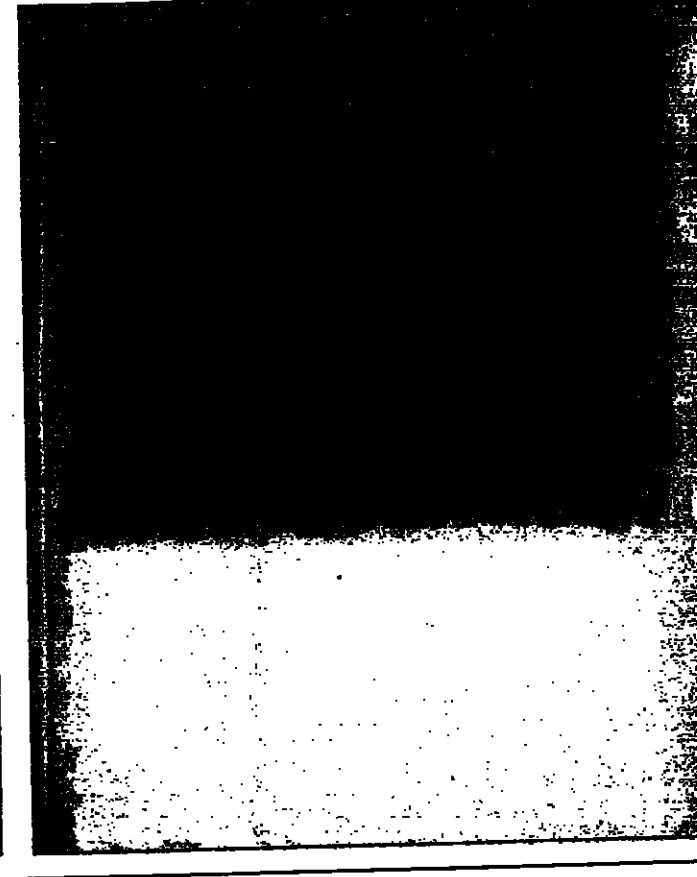
Some of his finest Californian poolscapes are here, including *A Bigger Splash*, and by 1970 he depicts two friends gazing as if spellbound towards converging avenues of trees in a Vichy park. Two years later, Hockney painted the most seductive canvas on show here: a luminous, melting view of Mount Fuji, its liquid forms contrasted with the precision of a single flower isolated in a foreground vase. His subsequent fascination with fractured, distorting perspective inspired by Cubism has led him to far more restless images. *Pearlblossom Highway*, shimmering in the Californian desert, is



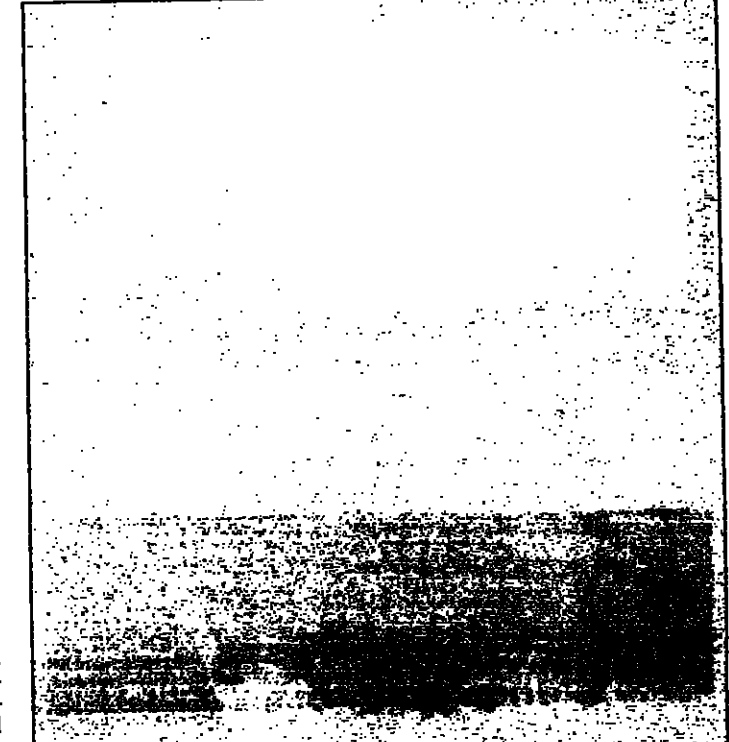
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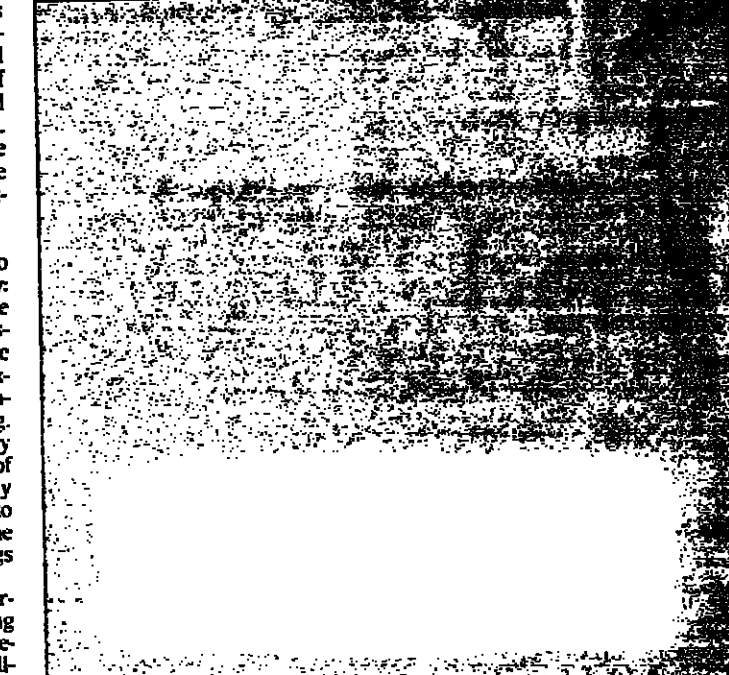
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WATE ROTHKO PRIZEL COLLECTION



METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK



MODERN ART MUSEUM, FORT WORTH

Well worth a pilgrimage to Paris: works by Mark Rothko in all his moods, both vibrant and gloomy, dating from 1949 to 1958

made from hundreds of colour photographs painstakingly assembled into a coherent view. The result is like a shattered mosaic, reconstructed piece by piece.

And it paves the way for an even more epic, multipart photographic collage of the Grand Canyon. Originally taken in 1932, these images now form the basis of two colossal canyon paintings executed last year. Displayed here at either end of the long final room, they are a tour de force of sustained, eye-bending observation.

● Mark Rothko at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (00331 5647000) until April 18; David Hockney: *Space/Landscape* at Centre Pompidou (00331 44781233) until April 26

AROUND THE LONDON GALLERIES

In the dingy deeps of the dirty old city

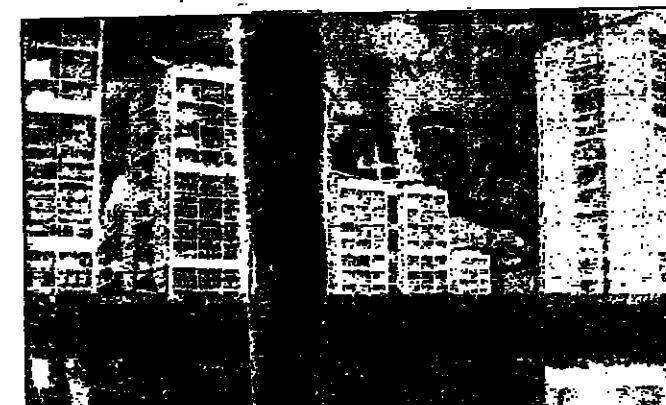
David Hepher is a landscape painter. Every summer he takes off to southern France, to romantic sunlit regions around Toulouse. For the rest of the year, as head of painting at the Slade School of Art, he works in London. The cityscape becomes his subject — but not the pomp and splendour of the tourist brochure. Hepher captures the type of urban landscape you might glimpse as you crawl through the bowels of the capital on a train. His subject is the bland reality of the high-rise housing estate, the 1960s dream gone wrong.

Against layered concrete and timber shuttering, tall rectangles cut stark geometries intended to echo the abstractions of Mondrian and De Stijl. As a teacher, Hepher flashes his art-historical credentials. Between a tower and a graffiti-scrawled fence, Piero della Francesca's view of Arezzo is quoted. A glimpse of El Greco's moonlit Toledo crouches in a corner. But the soulless atmosphere of these works belongs to an altogether more contemporary age. Stains seep, graffiti sprawls, paint overflows like a blocked drain.

Flowers East 199-205 Richmond Road, E8 (0181-985 3333) until Monday

□ AFTER a suicidal period of depression and a long, slow haul to stability, is Cork Street back almost at last, bobbing on the currents of contemporary art? The Helix Nahmad Gallery, which opened last year, is shortly to display the work of some of the most established names on the scene. And last week Robert Sandelson opened its doors onto a stylish new space at Number Five.

The art of the Russian painter and theatre designer Yuri Kuper forms the mainstay of Sandelson's first show. The viewer steps into a cabinet of curiosities, into a

Memory lane: Russian painter Yuri Kuper's *Apples on a Plate*David Hepher's *Study for Brandon Flats with Blue Stripe*

poetic realm collage from scrounged bric-a-brac. Antique copperplate writing, flowing newsprint, old tins and 'stcards and daguerreotype plate become part of the surfaces on which muted, textured tones of paint are layered and left to settle, like the dust of old memories. There is a sense that nothing has been disturbed for years, that flowers might have been found pressed between the leaves of a Victorian Bible, that not been trodden for some 50 years. Kuper recreates the stillness of some Miss Heisham's world.

This clashes strongly with the show in a downstairs gallery dedicated to up-to-the-minute art. Here Micha Klein's gassy tableau of camp fairies josts for attention with a typically painterly Jack Yeats, or the squinty squares of a Bridget Riley. And maze-like lithographs by Louise Bourgeois appear to have been chosen more for the name of the artist

than the merit of the work, this does little to detract from an otherwise fresh, heterogeneous show. Robert Sandelson, 5 Cork Street, W1 (0171-439 1001) until April 9

□ Arabella Caccia is vivacious and expressive. She managed to spill a cup of coffee over Nicola Rae on the day that they first met. Nicola maintained a characteristic serenity. But if the personalities of these two artists are different, their works are both rooted in the earth. Sifting and funneling ground-down soil into Perspex boxes, Rae creates wonderfully tranquil pieces which surprise and soothe. Caccia is more dramatic. The hot landscapes of South Africa are the starting point for swirling meditations on spirituality and myth.

New Burlington Street Gallery, W1 (0171-267 2466) until Saturday

RACHEL CAMPBELL-JOHNSTON

GREAT BRITISH HOPES

Rising stars in the arts firmament
MARK ROSENBLATT

Age: 21
Profession: Director
Education: St Paul's and Oxford. "So predictable."

Beginnings: Directing *Dr Faustus* at school at 16 with a £600 budget. "That's the joy of going to a rich institution."

Oxford edification: He mounted productions of *Entertaining Mr Sloane*, *Ghetto*, *Peer Gynt*, *Someone to Watch over Me*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Saved*.

Useful experience: "I acted at school and university, which was good grounding for a director."

Big break: He is assisting John Crowley, the director of *Macbeth*, starring Rufus

Sewell and Sally Dexter, arriving at the Queen's Theatre tonight.

Straight to the top, then? He was spotted by Thelma Holt, producer of *Macbeth*, while at Oxford. Holt was Cameron Mackintosh Professor of Contemporary Theatre there in his final year. She also saw his touring production of *The Taming of the Shrew* in Japan.

Eastern promise: "We went to Kyoto, Osaka and Tokyo, where we performed at the Globe — it's carpentered, a combination of authenticity and middle-class comfort. All the venues were very different, and I had to redirect and let the actors grow into it. I learnt to be philosophical — I didn't much like the show myself."

Royal command: "The Crown Prince and Princess came to the Tokyo Globe and I sat in a box with them."

Any mentors besides Thelma Holt? Richard Eyre was her predecessor at Oxford. "I went to the National Theatre's studio with my *Peer Gynt* company. We did an acting workshop with Fiona Shaw, voice sessions and singing."

What does "assisting" on *Macbeth* entail? "I rehearse the understudies and do little bits when the director asks

me. It's a brilliant learning experience."

Training: "There's a shameful lack of formal training for directors in this country. The best way to learn is through practical experience and I've been lucky."

Future plans: "I'm hoping to direct a show in a regional theatre studio, but I can't talk about it yet. Then, sometime, I may have a go at starting my own company."

HEATHER NEILL



Mark Rosenblatt: spotted by Thelma Holt while at Oxford

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ECONOMY

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SOUTH KOREA

FOCUS

Michael Knipe presents a four-page report on the economy, finance and investment taking place in South Korea

Spirit of revival ready to greet Queen's visit

South Korea marks the first anniversary of President Kim Dae Jung's term of office tomorrow with preparations under way in Seoul, the capital, for an eagerly awaited state visit by the Queen in April.

There are hopes that this royal occasion will set the seal on the country's remarkably speedy turnaround from the financial crisis it suffered when it was forced to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a \$58.35 billion (£38.3 billion) loan. That was in December 1997, after four decades of astonishing growth averaging 8 per cent a year.

Today the shock of the economic collapse is still apparent. Unemployment rates are expected to rise still further. But the belief is strong that the worst may be over.

There have been a series of indicators in the past few weeks that the programme of radical reforms introduced during the past year by the Kim Dae Jung administration are having the desired effect.

"Today our usable foreign exchange reserves exceed \$50 billion," said Mr Lee Kyu Sung, the Minister of Finance and Economy. "In 1997 they had sunk to \$4 billion so we have achieved a very dramatic increase."

Mr Lee highlighted other firm signs of revival: the exchange rate against the dollar, which a year ago spiralled to 1,950 won, has stabilised at around 1,170 won. Foreign



Foreign Minister Hong

exchange reserves, which had dwindled to \$3.8 billion, are now at a record high of \$50 billion. Interest rates have dropped dramatically from almost 30 per cent to about 8 per cent and inflows of foreign direct investment last year totalled \$8.9 billion — a record.

In December, Seoul began repaying its IMF loan with an amount close to \$4 billion, the clearest indication yet, in the eyes of Hubert Neiss, the IMF's director for the Asia and Pacific department, that for South Korea the balance of payments crisis is over. "It is premature to open the champagne," said Hong Soon Young, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, with a wry smile. "The economy is not completely out of

the turmoil. It is in the midst of restructuring. And restructuring, half finished, can be an invitation to another round of economic crisis.

"So this is no time for complacency or too much optimism. The rules of a free market economy are not firmly in place in the minds and behaviour of the economic players. I believe it will take at least another one or two years before we have the vitality and momentum for economic growth."

Nevertheless, in spite of these words of caution, there is no doubt that the Kim Dae Jung administration believes it is on the right path.

South Koreans are a modest people by nature, an ancient society overshadowed internationally by their richer Japanese neighbours and their more numerous Chinese ones.

There are few obvious signs of the economic depression in Seoul, largely destroyed during the war with the North in the 1950s and now a modern capital of unlovely 1960s and 1970s monumental architecture, cut through by ten and twelve-lane motorways, and relieved only by a few elegant palaces from past eras. Pedestrians have been all but banished to underground shopping malls and cross-street passageways.

However, the city has a thriving dynamism. Placards of elegantly uniformed receptionists are on hand in all official buildings, with numerous counter assistants, simi-



There are few signs of economic depression in Seoul: in some city stores staff wear clothes that are more chic than in Knightsbridge

larly attired, in modern department stores more chic, if anything, than their Knightsbridge and Fifth Avenue counterparts.

Bustling side-street shopping centres and street markets are open late and a modern and highly efficient underground and railway system is manned by staff as smartly dressed as military generals.

The Queen's visit will be her first to the Korean peninsula. It was pencilled in on her prospective agenda well before the financial crisis occurred. At that time, Korea's star was burning bright. It had the eleventh-largest economy in the world — ahead of Russia, Australia and India — and was the world's twelfth-largest trading nation. With a population of 46 million it had a

per capita income of \$10,000 and, in economic terms, it was the biggest country that the Queen had not visited.

As a result of the financial crisis, it has probably slipped down the economic league table somewhat over the past 15 months but what South Korea has lost in terms of its economic standing it has made up for in its democratic progress.

When the presidency passed to Kim Dae Jung, it was the first time that power had been transferred peacefully and democratically in Korea for 50 years.

So the case for the royal visit to go ahead in April is, if anything, stronger: it will show that Britain is not just a fair-weather friend and will demonstrate support for the

democratic changes that have occurred.

Relations between the two countries have been traditionally warm and they have been further enhanced by the fact that, during his days as political dissident, President Kim Dae Jung spent a year in Cambridge in 1993, based at his graduate college, Clare Hall. While at Cambridge he was a popular figure, befriended by his neighbour Professor Stephen Hawking — and he has since stated publicly that this period in his life was highly instrumental in what was, in effect, part of his preparation for high office.

Koreans will see the Queen's visit as a tribute to their democratic and economic reforms. This is considered particularly fitting as the struc-

tural reforms and free market ideology of the Thatcher years are held in high regard in Seoul.

"We are using Britain as a role model in seeing what government agencies can be delegated to the private sector," said Dr Kim Tae Dong, Senior Secretary to the President for Policy and Planning Affairs. "We hope the British experiment can be repeated in Korea. We firmly believe that the systematic and long-sustained reform can produce sustained growth as it did in Britain."

For Koreans, said Mr Hong, the Queen represents British values. "So this is how we appreciate Her Majesty and, particularly as this is her first visit, she will be assured of a hugely enthusiastic welcome."

Chaebols must reform

The top five chaebols, the family orientated conglomerates that dominate the South Korean economy, are now the prime targets of the Seoul Government as it presses ahead with the latest stage of its programme to reform the country's fortunes: corporate restructuring.

The five — Hyundai, Samsung, Daewoo, LG Group (formerly Lucky Goldstar) and the SK Group (formerly Sunkyong) — together with about 50 smaller chaebols, were for several decades the primary engines of growth for the South Korean economy. However, their numerous and diverse subsidiaries, which borrowed and spent recklessly — amid frequent accusations of corruption — are widely blamed for bringing the country to its knees economically.

Under pressure from President Kim Dae Jung's administration, the top five chaebols agreed in December to undertake a series of reforms including putting up for sale their marginal and unprofitable units and to focus their activities more directly on their core sectors. But the battle of wills between the Government reformers and the chaebol tycoons is not over.

"Several of the top figures own only 5 or 6 per cent of their conglomerate's shares but act as if they own 100 per cent, and are resisting the reforms the Government is introducing," says Dr Yoo Jong Keun, the Governor of the North Cholla Province and a senior economic adviser to President Kim Dae Jung. "That can no longer be tolerated. For some the overriding concern is to maintain control of their businesses but some will be in danger of losing it."

Dr Yoo, a former economics professor at Rutgers University, is an influential figure in the President's team of reformers and describes himself as "public enemy No 1, as far as the chaebols are concerned". The top five have committed themselves to shedding 91 of their subsidiaries through mergers, liquidations and sell-offs to foreign business interests. They have also undertaken to repay external debts owed by other subsidiaries to improve their financial standing.

"Last year we devised a very specific plan to restructure the top five chaebols," says Lee Ki Song, the Minister of Finance and Economy. "This year we are making sure the plan will be implemented on schedule. We are determined to ensure that they concentrate on their core areas of competence, that they do not digress from this and that they achieve a debt ratio of 200 per cent by the end of the year. At present the top chaebols have an average of 27 subsidiaries each. And each one

of them is running businesses in some 20 different industries. We are determined that this kind of diversification will disappear and when it does I expect Korean companies to re-emerge in the international market with much improved competitiveness."

The three other areas affected by the reform programme are the public labour and financial sectors.

In the public sector five of 24 non-financial state-owned enterprises have been privatised in stages this year and another six will be by 2002 including Korea Telecom and the Korea Electric Power Corporation, as well as 76 subsidiaries. The process will involve cutting the labour force by 30,000, a 21 per cent fall.

"We are not going to stop there," says Dr Kim Tae Dong, the Senior Secretary to the President for Policy and Planning Affairs. "All government ministries are under man-

agement by outside teams of consultants. No other country has attempted this kind of reform. The purpose will be to decide which government agencies can be delegated to the marketplace."

A campaign to eliminate excessive regulations has so far scrapped about half of nearly 12,000 existing rules.

According to Kang Bong Kyun, Senior Secretary to the President for Economic Affairs, the economic restructuring programme should be completed this year and the economy should return to normal growth next year. But, he says, it will be another three years before the country regains the \$10,000 per capita income levels it had before the onset of the financial crisis.



Reforms are helping to revive the country's fortunes



Executive suite: former company chief Suh Sang Rok training to be a waiter at a Seoul hotel

Tycoon works for tips

Despite signs of economic recovery, unemployment in South Korea is at its highest since monthly statistics were first compiled 16 years ago. It is expected to rise to two million this year — more than 8 per cent of the workforce.

Job losses have hit every level. These are explosive statistics in a society that, even under a series of authoritarian regimes, became internationally notorious for violent strikes and demonstrations. One of the Kim Dae Jung administration's first steps was to pass legislation allowing businesses to lay off workers. For Koreans, who had taken lifetime employment for granted, it was a dramatic step away from traditional practices.

At 62, Suh Sang Rok felt he was secure as vice-chairman of the Sammi Group, once the country's 26th-largest conglomerate. But in the turmoil of the economic crisis, he lost his job and so went on a waiter's training course at a large hotel in Seoul.

UNEMPLOYMENT

The new laws provoked a strike at the Hyundai Motor Corporation that became a test case. Resolved after a month by a programme of lay-offs, unpaid leave and early retirements, it was seen as a significant victory for greater industrial labour flexibility.

The Government also created a tripartite commission comprising representatives of trade unions, industrial management and the Government to handle labour relations. But, with the unemployment rate increasing, the prospect of more industrial unrest is looming. Angry union activists have criticised the Government and corporate heads for unilaterally laying off workers in the name of restructuring.

"The trouble is that you cannot make unemployment disappear. There is no such solution," says Dr Yoo Jong Keun, an economic adviser to the President. "The UK has been through this. What

we are having to do is direct our efforts to extending the welfare safety nets so that our unemployed are not destitute."

Last year the Government spent \$8.5 billion extending welfare benefits, says Dr Kim Mo Im, Minister of Health and Welfare, and her budget this year will increase by 25 per cent. "We are placing the emphasis on improving welfare benefits and retraining people for new jobs in new sectors."

Shelters have been set up for the homeless unemployed, and dole payouts extended from three to six months. Public work projects have been created and retraining programmes developed.

The relative absence of serious labour unrest in the past year, as Koreans rallied to support the Government in the face of an economic crisis, was an important element in the recovery.

Foreign investment was another, but, if labour unrest occurs now, it will be very difficult to attract more foreign money.

Reign of the bank-tamer

FINANCE

Lee Hun Jai is diminutive in stature and — wearing a navy blue cardigan in his office in the centre of Seoul — he projects a mild and charming demeanour. Yet Mr Lee is the Korean Government's chief financial hatchet man, charged with ending decades of collusion between banks and chaebols, the family-orientated conglomerates which dominate the South Korean economy.

Since April last year he has forced the closure of five Korean banks, the merger of four others, closed down 16 merchant banks and four life insurance companies.

Dozens of finance companies have been shut down and the banking sector was ordered to shed a third of its workforce — 40,000 people.

Mr Lee currently has seven more insurance companies in his sights and expects to move house and stay in hotels at least three of them. Naturally, he said, there had been lots of resistance to such closures.

It was, after all, the first time in Korean history that such a thing had happened. Everyone believed that banks would never go under because they had the Government behind them.

However, a year ago the economic collapse coincided with the election of a new Government which imposed a programme of radical economic reform.

Mr Lee does not make a big thing of it but, according to his staff, the responses to his actions were so threatening, initially, that, for safety, he moved discreetly out of his house and into his wife's art studio and various hotels.

The authority Mr Lee exerts

stems from the fact that he is chairman of the South Korea Finance Supervisory Commission, the Government's watchdog body responsible for ensuring that Korea's banking and financial services comply with international standards of probity and transparency.

Since November 1997, said Mr Lee, \$0.9 trillion won (about \$40 billion) had been spent on restructuring the financial sector, including nearly 20 trillion won on the purchase of 44.1 trillion won worth of non-performing loans held by financial institutions.

A good start had been made, he said, but much more needed to be done. One of the most important things he said, was to change the mind-sets of the banking management men who had worked so long in an environment in which, under the umbrella of government protection, financial institutions had indulged in questionable lending practices.

Reckless lenders had been paired with reckless borrowers. Chaebols pursued excessively leveraged expansion based on a "too-big-to-fail" theory.

The cosy relationship between the banks and chaebols was revealed when the Hanbo Group — one of the 15 biggest industrial concerns — collapsed in January 1997. A loans-for-bribes scandal emerged and a rash of bankruptcies ensued.

Mr Lee is now focusing his attention on corporate restructuring. The measures being used include the phasing out of cross guarantees, the reduction in debt to equity ratio, debt workouts with bank creditors, reductions of affiliates and the elimination of excess capacity.

There had been much progress in restructuring the small and medium sized groups, he said, but this was proving more difficult with the big five — Hyundai, Samsung, Daewoo, LG and SK — whose structures and affiliations were extremely complex.

The big five sold 35 affiliates to foreign companies last year and have stated that they will dispose of another 91 of their subsidiaries through mergers, liquidations and sell-offs to foreign business interests this year.

He has urged the creditors of the big chaebols to force financial reform during the first half of this year. If the chaebols failed to reform themselves, the Government would force through the necessary changes, he said. It would take time but, he predicted, by the end of this year it would have been achieved fundamentally.

The net losses of Korean banks last year hit a record high of 14.48 trillion won compared with losses of 3.88 trillion in 1997.



Lee Hun Jai: threats made him move house and stay in hotels

Doors open for inward investment

The British-based Hongkong & Shanghai Banking Corporation was chosen this week by the South Korean Government to take over the majority shareholding of the ailing Seoul Bank. It is only the second Korean bank to be sold to a foreign enterprise. The first was the Korea First Bank which was purchased last month by an international consortium headed by the United States-based Newbridge Capital.

The announcement of the second sale came only days after Stephen Brown, the British Ambassador to Seoul, publicly expressed his regret that British companies, with what he said were very good bids, were consistently losing out to American investors. His comments, in an interview with the English-language Korea Times newspaper, was seen

as an expression of disappointment at the sale of the Korea First Bank to the American conglomerate and an indication of the competitive pressures among the international community to acquire a toehold in South Korea.

Foreign direct investment into the country totalled \$8.85 billion last year, a record high and a 27 per cent increase on 1997. The Government's target for this year is \$15 billion.

Of this UK investment amounted to \$60 million, a slight increase over the previous year. And if British Telecom's investment in Korea's LG Telecom — which was made through the BT affiliate in the Netherlands — is added on the total of investment amount from the UK surged to \$457 million.

This month has seen two major

INVESTMENT

British investments. PowerGen UK is investing \$210 million in LG Energy, a subsidiary of the LG Group, to build a 528 megawatt gas-fired combined-cycle gas turbine plant at Asan Bay in South Chungcheong Province. It will be the first power plant constructed in Korea by a private company. And British Aerospace has won a £46 million contract from the South Korean navy to develop and produce the combat management system for three 5,000-tonne South Korean destroyers. Meanwhile, Tesco is setting up a joint venture firm with the marketing division of Samsung.

"In the past Korea did not pay attention to the need for foreign investment," said Park Tae Young,

the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Energy. In 1996 it was only 2.4 per cent of GDP compared with more than 20 per cent in the UK. But since the extent of the financial crisis became apparent the public had come to realise that it was an imperative element of economic recovery.

Attracting foreign investment is now a top priority and the Government has shifted the direction of policy towards promoting rather than regulating it. The types of business eligible for tax reduction or exemption has been expanded from 255 to 533 and foreign investment zones have been established in which incentives are offered to foreign investors who create new business.

At present foreign investors receive benefits only when their indi-

vidual investment exceeds \$100 million. But in an effort to entice more small-scale foreign investors, the Government is considering providing tax incentives to groups of small companies engaged in similar lines of work if their aggregate investment amounts to \$100 million. "Now we are allowing even hostile mergers and acquisitions of Korean companies by foreign companies and foreigners can also own real estate here," Mr Park says.

The Government is also keen to promote venture capital enterprises. "I believe that if we can combine British advanced technology and capital with Korean manufacturing power then companies here will be able to enhance their competitiveness considerably, so I expect more investment from Britain," Mr Park adds.

Friends or foes?

Michael Knipe
reports on
a pale glint
of sunshine

If you use a pair of binoculars to peer through the winter mist across the demilitarised zone between South and North Korea, you can just make out the shape of a North Korean border guard in a watchtower, staring back.

This, the world's most fortified border, dividing the Stalinist North from the democratised South, is one of the last remnants of the Cold War.

A South Korean soldier points out the buildings of Kungdong which, he says, is a fake North Korean village. There are no fires and no laundry hung out to dry.

When the wind is blowing in the right direction the North Koreans occasionally dispatch balloons carrying leaflets extolling the virtues of their President, Kim Jong Il. But the confrontation along the demilitarised zone (DMZ), just 27 miles north of Seoul, is, at present, mostly uneventful.

The most recent North Korean defector to cross over made his move five months ago and there has been no shooting across the border for at least a year. North Korean propaganda, which used to blast across the DMZ through huge speakers for 18 hours a day, now spouts forth for no more than five hours a day. "That's because the North is so short of electricity," says Corporal Park Min Woo.

The shortage of electricity, like the rash of attempted escapes across North Korea's northern border into China, are signs of the desperate economic plight of the Pyongyang regime and are of great concern to President Kim Dae Jung's Government in Seoul.

On taking office, the South Korean President embarked on a "sunshine policy" aimed at achieving peace on the Korean peninsula through reconciliation and co-operation with the Pyongyang Government. Opposition critics fear that in the face of the North's development of long-range missiles

and a suspected nuclear facility, this approach may prove to be nothing better than a policy of appeasement.

The Government in Seoul rejects this. Hong Soon Young, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, says: "Our policy is that the North Korean regime must be warned sternly of the penalties they face over such provocations, but that these should be seen in the context of inter-Korean relations and in no circumstances should there be overreaction. There should be no black or white reactions to acts of provocation. This is what diplomacy is all about."

Instead Seoul is trying to promote what it describes as an atmosphere which will help Pyongyang to start reform of its own volition. It is actively pushing for South-North co-operation and exchanges. There are indications of positive change of a limited but distinct nature, says Mr Hong. The regime is lessening its state of isolation and showing signs of taking account of market forces.

Kim Hyung Kee, the head of unification policy at the Ministry of Unification, points to the



Warriors and peaceniks: soldiers at the border and Chung Ju Yung with his cattle

Government's policy of allowing private-sector exchanges across the border. The most spectacular of these was orchestrated and then led by Chung Ju Yung, 83, the founder and honorary chairman of Hyundai, the largest of Korea's conglomerates.

Last June he became the first South Korean civilian to enter North Korea across the DMZ at Panmunjom. Accompanied by TV cameras, he took with him 500 head of cattle which, it was hoped, would help to improve North stock. A gift to the people of his native Tongchon district, the animals were transported on 50 trucks specially built by Hyundai for the trip and also donated to the North. On his return, Mr Chung sent a further 500 head of cattle and donated 50,000 tons of grain, spending a total of \$8.5 million on the venture.

In November, Mr Chung began offering South Koreans cruise trips through the East Sea to view Mount Kumgang (Diamond Mountain), a North Korean peak of great symbolic significance to Koreans. The passengers were the first South Korean tourists to

visit the North since the peninsula was divided half a century ago.

One of the passengers reported that the sightseeing area they visited was extremely limited and that they were not allowed to deviate from the designated course. They had no opportunity to make contact with North Koreans. The few people they saw beyond the barbed wire were expressionless and indifferent to them "as if we weren't there".

In spite of these drawbacks, Mr Chung has more ambitious plans. The Hyundai Group has obtained exclusive rights from the Pyongyang regime to develop tourist facilities on and around Mount Kumgang. It plans to invest \$397 million by the end of next year to build ski resorts, golf courses, condominiums and hotels. Hyundai has already paid \$2.4 million to the North from the Mount Kumgang entrance fees. Hyundai is also drawing up a masterplan for the development of an industrial complex covering with a total area of 66 million square metres on the west coast of North Korea.

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HYUNDAI
FOR THE FUTURE

Jennifer Veale reports from Seoul on an imminent political dogfight, while Ruth Taplin examines the benefits of UK-Korean business deals

Editorial

Kim Dae Jung, the South Korean President, starts his second year in office this week, a turning point which looks certain to mark the end of his honeymoon with some old-fashioned political brawl.

During an impressive debut year, the former dissident has won respect worldwide for his determination to implement a political agenda aimed at opening up a shuttered economy in the face of powerful vested interests. But 1999 will prove the add test of his capacity to make the really tough decisions.

President Kim faces mounting political challenges. After lying low for most of last year while the Government went about fixing the economy, the Opposition is now exploiting the exasperation of a recession-hit public to stir protest against painful reforms to the powerful conglomerates (known as chaebols) with which it has close ties. In addition, the President's unlikely coalition with the man who headed Korea's spy agency during his dissident days is looking shaky over delays to landmark reforms to the political system.

But the challenges issued by the opposition and the chaebols are becoming President Kim's biggest headaches. They are spoiling for a brawl over the key element of his economic reforms — business swaps and mergers known as "big deals" which have been designed to trim back the sprawling conglomerates.

A year of political blood-letting beckons. The opposition Grand National Party accuses President Kim's National Congress for New Politics of discriminating against chaebols from the GNP's southeastern strongholds. It also challenges strong-arm tactics that it says the Government is using to push the "big deals" through.

"The honeymoon is over," says Jon Gryn Mo, a political science professor at Yonsei University in Seoul. "Basically, for the first six months, President Kim could do whatever he wanted. Now every-
one is showing signs of resistance."

The GNP lost by a whisker at the last election, ending a 50-year monopoly of political power by conservative parties. But it has regrouped and is mounting a fresh challenge to President Kim's coalition Government. Lee Hoi Chang, the GNP leader, has accused President Kim of acting like a dictator and of fanning chronic regional antipathies by discriminating against areas outside his political stronghold in the southwest provinces.



Steering the country out of troubled times: Kim Dae Jung, the South Korean President, is optimistic about his country's future

Honeymoon over for champion of reform

Driving the GNP's resurgence is its fear that it may be reduced to a rump if the NCNP succeeds in eroding its power-base in the southwest provinces, as it must do to win re-election in its own right. Already the NCNP has secured a House majority by poaching two dozen of the opposition's law-makers.

Currently, the proxy war being fought is over the Government's plan to trim back the operations of the chaebols, whose loan binges contributed to the economic crisis. These "big deals" will result in sweeping lay-offs.

The GNP claims that most job losses will hit its power-base of South Kyongsang Province, where most of the top chaebols are based. It has drawn strength from a disgruntled public fearful for their jobs, and is calling on the Govern-

ment to stop force-feeding reforms down the throats of the chaebols.

The GNP's determination to make this year a difficult one for President Kim was exemplified at a protest rally it staged late last month against a planned "big deal" between Samsung and Daewoo. The rally served as a wake-up call for the Government.

"The Government was stunned by the turnout and the people's mood," Professor Jon Gryn Mo says. But it has since picked up the scent of discontent and recently began peacemaking moves with the GNP, the fruits of which have not yet ripened.

While fighting a pumped-up opposition, the NCNP also has prob-

A year of political brawling beckons as resistance grows

lems closer to home. Its alliance with the United Liberal Democrats, led by the deeply conservative former spy agency boss Kim Jong Pil, is under strain because of delays in implementing political reforms.

President Kim, a champion of democracy, pledged during his campaign to dilute the virtually unchallenged power of the Prime Minister, who would be responsible to parliament.

Kim Jong Pil, the current Prime Minister, has recently been outspo-

ken about his desire to see his coalition partner make good on the promise. While the NCNP insists that it will act on its pledge, it has been put on the back-burner as the Government tackles the more weighty matter of economic recovery.

"Kim Jong Pil isn't expected to sit idly by if the President ditches that promise," says Professor Lee Jong Hoon, a political scientist.

In an ironic twist, the Opposition's campaign to wreck the NCNP's bid to establish political hegemony may be in Kim Jong Pil's best interests.

Observers say that parliamentary reforms to appease the coalition partner will be pushed down the NCNP priority list if it believes it can win an election without the help of the ULD.

Adventures in joint ventures

INVESTMENT IN UK

Korean outward investment to the UK has slowed. With the economic turmoil forcing the chaebols to restructure, the resultant selling and exchanging of assets has become a preoccupation for them.

Samsung, for example, has sold its automotive sector to Daewoo and the latter has sold its electronics division to Samsung. Meanwhile, Samsung is consolidating its electronics division in the UK and is moving its headquarters from Frankfurt to London.

Hyundai is in the final stages of buying the semiconductor division of LG, including the new semiconductor plant in Wales. It now remains to be seen what Hyundai will do with the operation planned for Newport in South Wales.

Daewoo continues to be a stable source of employment and investment in the UK, with its automotive division showing signs of substantial success.

The emphasis in relation to investments lies at present with those companies seeking venture capital and joint ventures. Venture companies in Korea are defined as advanced technology businesses that achieve growth through continuous research and development which amounts to at least 10 per cent of turnover.

The most important component of the Korean venture industry is

the high level of education of the Korean workforce. The majority of engineers, for example, hold PhDs and most have been educated in the United States. Some Koreans study in the UK, and universities in cities such as Newcastle are attempting to attract greater numbers.

Korean venture companies produce many innovative products but require greater capital investment to commercialise their internationally competitive technologies and products. Some are now linking themselves to the chaebols, which have the global sales markets and the foreign capital required. However, there is a big drive under way to attract foreign investors to the UK.

Last November KOTRA, the Korean trade organisation, brought to the UK representatives of a wide range of venture companies, in areas ranging from electronics to textiles, some of whom were successful in finding joint-venture partners in Britain.

The majority of Korean companies go to the US for their capital, but the UK is now seen as more promising, as the nature of venture capital is becoming more flexible. Successes in such partnerships in the long term can only benefit inward investment into the UK as joint ventures flourish, providing capital returns to British investors and, in the future, new factories and employment.



Daewoo's automotive operation in the UK is proving a success



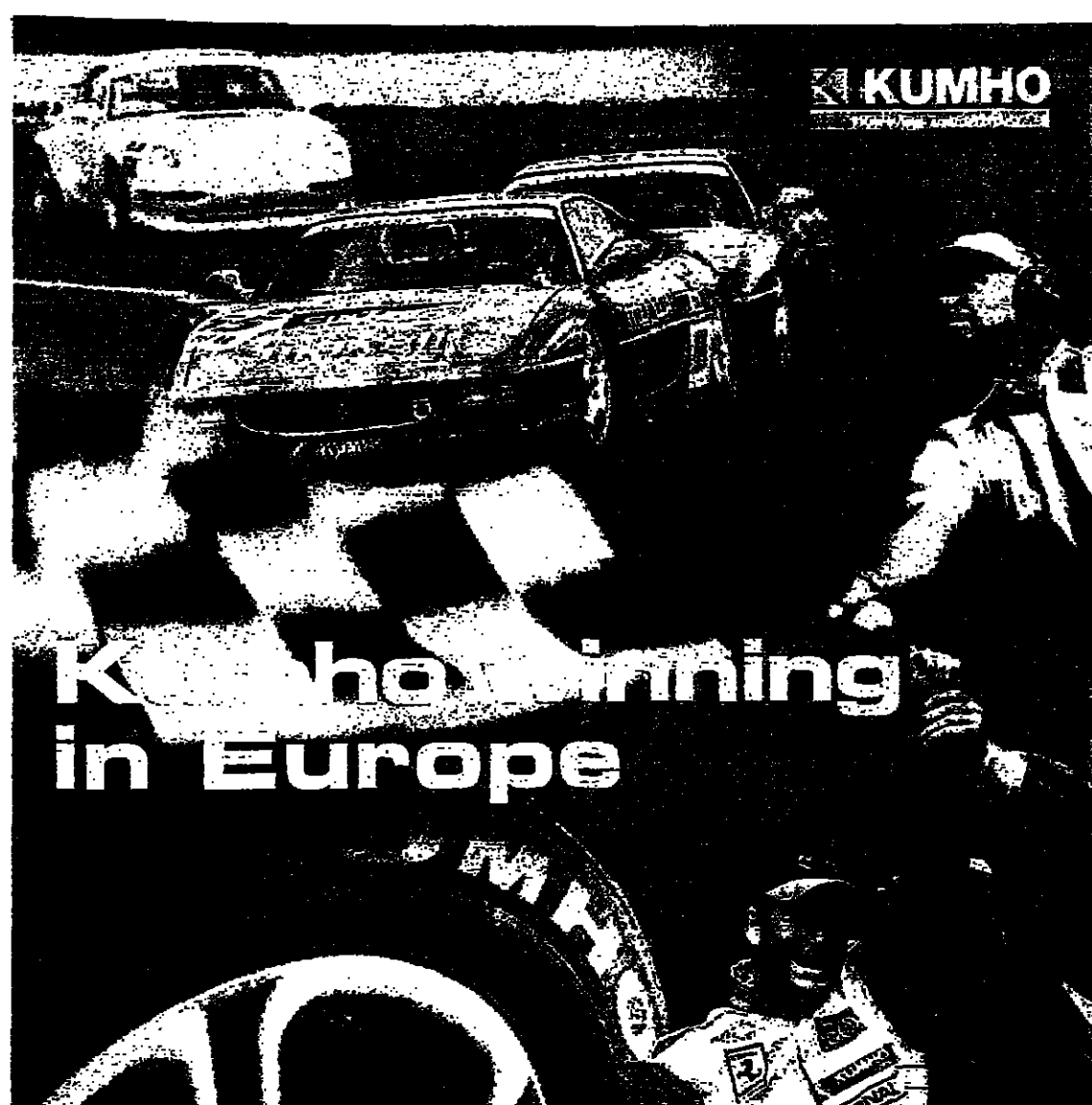
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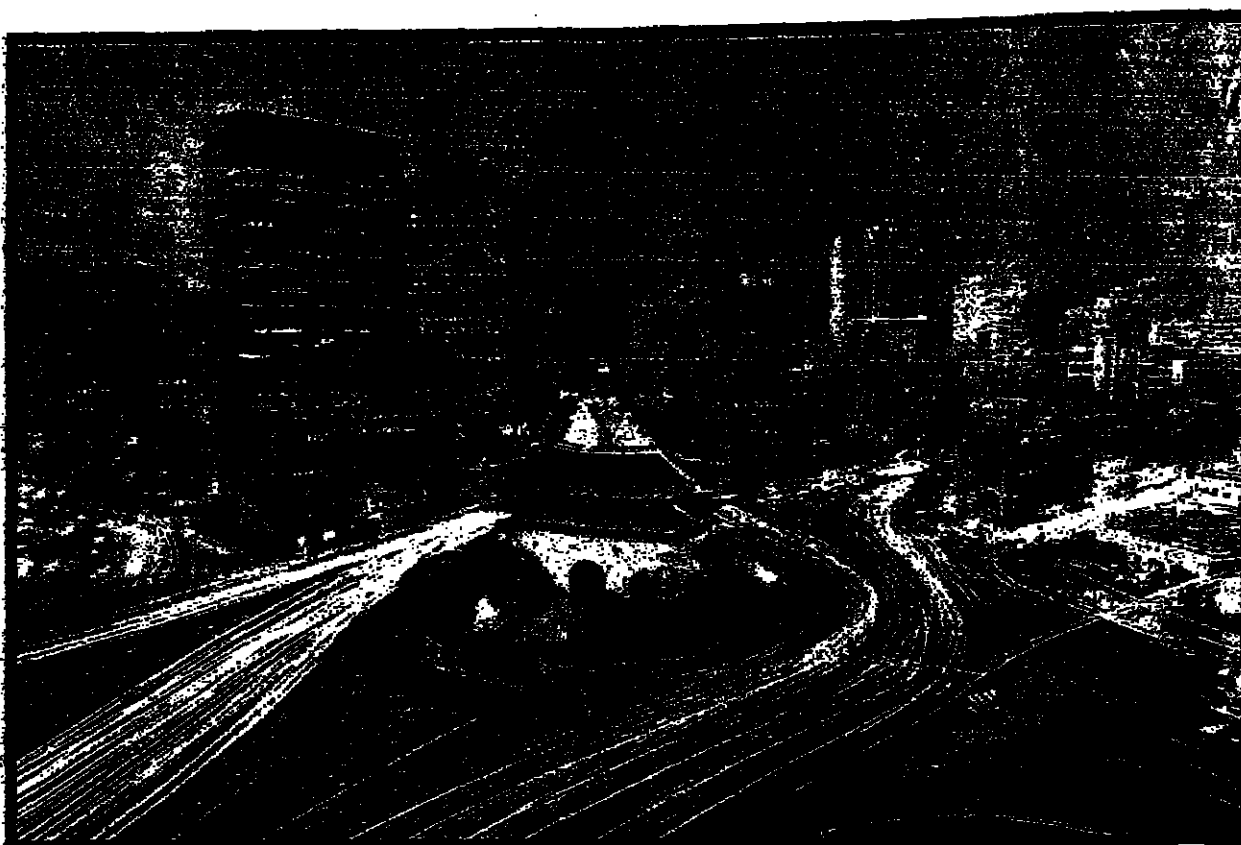
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Get smart and get out of that jam



Korean traffic at night: road improvements and intelligent transport systems are helping to remove congestion

Traffic is heavy in Seoul and other big Korean cities, largely because of an excess of cars and excessive road-building. But a number of bold initiatives are being undertaken to deal with traffic congestion.

This is leading to greater co-operation between the UK and South Korea in the field of intelligent transport systems (ITS).

A two-week mission to Korea by ITS Focus, a British transport research organisation, supported by the DTI, was impressed by the success of one Korean initiative to deal with traffic congestion. This is based on the use of a high-tech e-commerce-based smartcard.

Pusan, the second largest city in South Korea, loses \$1.3 billion each year because of traffic congestion. To combat the problem, the authorities have introduced the Hanaro (buy only one) smartcard system which makes it easier for

Ruth Taplin reports on how co-operation between the UK and South Korea could help to improve road and rail travel

people to use public transport.

The card can be used to pay for bus, minibus travel and the underground rail service in Pusan. An electronic purse model is also available which can pay for taxis and goods in shops. The simpler prepaid card is more popular and allows for fare discounts if used regularly. The take-up has been 76 per cent of the 200 million commuters targeted since the Hanaro system was initiated last August.

The British mission also noted that unlike the UK, the Ko-

rea Highway Corporation (KHC) is helping to develop road traffic conditions that will relieve overall traffic congestion, and it has initiated a new era of expressway building. The intention is that increased road capacity will be built with an integral ITS linked to a network of regional traffic control centres.

Despite the country's economic turmoil these ambitious plans are continuing. The ITS mission believes that UK companies can learn from these plans and members can also

offer supportive services to the Koreans to further the plans.

Co-operation and collaboration between the UK and Korea in the realm of automotive development takes many forms and is invaluable for both sides.

Since Daewoo Motors came to Britain, for example, the AA has been providing purchasers of its vehicles with a three-year free servicing warranty and roadside assistance package. The association also provides a recovery and replacement car service.

So much emphasis has been placed on takeovers and swap deals of major chaebols that the success of other smaller conglomerates which provide necessary components — particularly in the transportation sector — sometimes goes unrecognised.

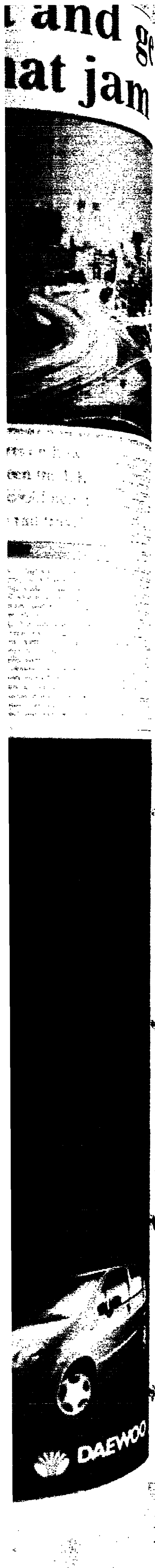
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RACING: LOSS OF 1,000 GUINEAS FAVOURITE AND DOUBTS ABOUT BIONIC MAR CLASSIC OUTLOOK

Bint Allayl put down after injuring leg

By Chris McGrath

BINT ALLAYL, the champion juvenile filly and favourite for the Sagitta 1,000 Guineas, was put down late on Monday night after a frantic battle to save her after she sustained leg injuries during exercise that morning.

Her death not only deprives the forthcoming Flat season of one of its most luminous young talents, but is also a ghastly blow to Mick Channon, whom she had helped reach new heights in his audience.

Yesterday's meeting at Sedgefield was called off because parts of the course in the back straight still had frost. The fixture was to have been the first at the track since three horses were killed in an horrific collision there last Tuesday.

Channon's second career in sport. Though Channon is not the type to be debauched by his breakthrough achievements last year, even he must be shocked by so savage a reminder of his new calling's uncertainties.

He was typically lacking in self-pity yesterday. "You can only be positive in a situation like this," he said. "We were lucky to have her and now we have to move on. Tomorrow morning, we'll go out to work and see if we can find another one. It's tough on me, sure, but it's tough on the staff and the



Bint Allayl wins the Lowther Stakes at York last season on her way to being acclaimed Europe's top juvenile filly

owner, too. Sheikh Ahmed has plenty of horses, but he thought an awful lot of her. The trainer added: "Every one is very disappointed, but it's the business we're in. I'm afraid."

If any of Bionics' ante-post supporters are cynical enough to scoff from the tragedy, however, they will thoroughly deserve the torments in

store during the coming weeks.

Henry Cecil, her trainer, confesses that Bionics' foot problems menace her participation in the Guineas. His first priority, however, was to express sympathy for the calamity that claimed her long-time market rival.

The irony is that Channon had only retained the services

of Bint Allayl against two more obvious threats. She dodged the draft to Dubai with Godolphin, and also underwent surgery on a hock, which denied her what Channon might justly consider "a genuine kick" for the Cheveley Park Stakes. That fell to Warrane Grand, whom she had beaten with customary flair in the Lowther Stakes at York.

Channon still had much his best season, showing great assurance in handling his first yearlings from Sheikh Ahmed al-Maktoum, for whom he also won the Gimcrack Stakes with Jost Algarhoud. Though that colt did go to Dubai, Channon's allocation has been doubled to 12.

Anthony Stroud, the Sheikh's racing manager,

said: "While doing a routine canter Bint Allayl suffered a complete spiral fracture of her left fore humerus. She was given emergency first aid on site and transported to Donnington Grove Veterinary Surgery." Here five experts strove in vain to rescue the filly. Stroud added: "Sheikh Ahmed would like to thank them and their staff for their tireless efforts. Mick Channon, who trained her so well, Candy Morris, who rode her, and her dedicated staff, Alwara Jones."

The Green Desert filly had shared 5-1 Guineas favouritism with Bionics in the Tote's betting. Bionics now has that dubious honour to herself, at 4-1, followed on 9-1 by Molava and Eticaaz. Ladbrokes, better attuned to Cecil's problems, prefers Molava as favourite at 7-1, with Bionics as big as 9-1. Even that price will make no appeal to anyone reading Cecil's frank update. "She has problems with her feet and it's a question of whether we can train her with them," he said. "It will put itself right eventually, it's a matter of the time we have got. She has been cantering, but not just lately, as she had a corn that had to be cut out. That's not her major problem. She is trotting now and I hope she'll be cantering by the end of the week."

Bionics was restricted to just one appearance at two, impressing in a Goodwood maiden, so she will be sorely lacking experience even if Cecil can get her to the classic.

McCoy escapes lightly from heavy Ludlow fall

By Chris McGrath

TONY MCCOY often appears as indestructible as he can be invincible and the champion jockey was certainly lucky to escape serious injury at Ludlow yesterday.

Leading over the first in the novice handicap chase on Northern Downs, McCoy was thrown to the ground and trampled underfoot by the following field. He lay motionless before being stretched by ambulance to Hereford Hospital for X-rays.

Happily, his vow leaving the course — "I'll take more than this to keep me out of the Cheltenham Festival" — proved no mere bravado, and he was later discharged with nothing more serious than a badly bruised right leg. How his colleague, Andrew Thornton, must envy his good fortune. He makes a welcome return at Folkestone today, after surgery on a leg infection at the end of the year.

The annual general meeting of the Betting Office Licensees Association (BOLA) yesterday was verbal. Even here his chairman, Chris Bell, distanced himself from "fizz and froth" over the forthcoming negotiations between racing and betting industries on the next Levy Scheme.

He undertook to keep the "temperature of discussions under control" — and he may have gone some way towards that objective by extending something of an olive twig to the British Horseracing Board (BHB). He told his fellow bookmakers: "I am sympathetic to the challenges of the level of prize-money in racing, and I do want to see targeted improvements."

Though he could see nothing remotely resembling a crisis in racing, he conceded that there is always room for improvement. He was "not complacent". He added: "Nevertheless, at its core the BHB Financial Plan simply does not reveal a state of crisis, except in one clear category — the owners' desire to have a higher level of financial return. On all other issues, in the main, we agree."

He added: "What we can do is ensure that, above all of those shrill voices, we patiently and comprehensively explain our position to those prepared to make reasoned judgments. There are lots of people in positions of responsibility in bookmaking and racing who fit that category."

Peter Savill, the BHB chairman who has matched the early inflexibility of the betting industry's hawks, expressed confidence that he could bring the Levy Board neutrals round to his point of view. "I'm sure that, certainly, we will not shrink from that challenge."

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FOOTBALL

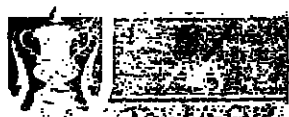
Rovers forced to dig deep for fresh reserves

By STEPHEN WOOD

IF BLACKBURN Rovers were indeed "running on empty" last weekend, as Brian Kidd, their manager, suggested, there appears to be little hope for them against Newcastle United tonight. The Ewood Park club's resources have been stretched to the limit and the FA Cup fifth-round replay, for the right to meet Everton in the quarter-finals, comes only four days after their worst defeat of the season.

The law of diminishing returns has gripped Blackburn since Kidd took over as manager. He may have indulged himself in the transfer market, to the tune of £15 million, but his options seem to have been reduced with every match. Jason McAteer and Matt Jansen, automatic selections in the FA Cup, are ineligible for the Cup, but their absence is the tip of the iceberg.

Chris Sutton and Stephane Henchoz are also missing



tonight, because of injury. Sutton may not need an operation on the foot problem that has troubled him all season, but it is enough to keep him on the sidelines for a further fortnight in what, he accepts, has become his worst season. His enforced inactivity could also affect his chances of earning an England call-up under Kevin Keegan.

Kidd was typically stoical

about his injury-ravaged squad yesterday. "There's no point in bellyaching about it," he said. "The players have been hurting while they've been hurting and that's what it's going to be like until the end of the season."

Newcastle's most significant worry concerned Alan Shearer, who was left behind when the squad travelled yesterday because of flu but who Ruud Gullit, the manager, hopes will be able to join his teammates today.

Darren Peacock, the Blackburn defender who used to be a team-mate of Shearer's at Newcastle, expects to be up against the England captain — and knows the key to triumph for a reshuffled defence will be keeping him as quiet as in the first match, which ended 0-0. Peacock dismisses suggestions that Shearer has lost any of his threat. "He is still the same player as far as I'm concerned," Peacock said. "He is powerful and strong and, if you give him a chance, he'll score."

Ronaldo struggles to regain fitness

RONALDO may miss Internazionale's European Cup quarter-final, first-leg game against Manchester United at Old Trafford next Wednesday. The Brazil striker has been dogged by a knee injury all season and has played only six full matches for the UEFA Cup holders. He has missed Inter's last seven games and only resumed training on Monday after weeks working out in the gym and swimming pool.

There are clear signs of improvement, but it won't be easy for the match against Manchester United. Massimo Moratti, president of Inter, said yesterday in Milan: "He only got back on so a pitch yesterday."

Inter have adopted a policy

Parma, and also in the 3-1 victory over Real Madrid, the European champions, in November.

Some of Ronaldo's Brazilian counterparts at Palmeiras were fuming yesterday after Luiz Felipe Scolari, their coach, claimed they were too fat and gave details of their weight to the media to prove it. Scolari was unrepentant and said that he would continue issuing weight bulletins until players trimmed down.

"There are certain matters which need to be made public," Zinho, team captain and a member of Brazil's 1994 World Cup-winning team, who was registered as being more than 21b overweight, said. Paulo Nunes, a striker listed as being more than 6lb too heavy, was also upset. "This didn't need to happen. If I go out to a restaurant, everybody is going to start commenting."



Choi and Kim pose for photographs at Kimpo airport in Seoul before flying to London to link up with West Ham

West Ham disown Koreans

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

WEST HAM United yesterday insisted that rumours that they were to sign two South Korea internationals in a multimillion-pound deal were grossly exaggerated. The FA Carling Premiership club said that they were simply doing them a favour by allowing the two players to train with them.

West Ham were reported to have paid an Asian record transfer fee of £3 million for Choi Yong-soo, South Korea's top striker, and a further £1 million for Kim Doh-keun, a midfielder.

But Peter Storr, the chief executive at Upton Park, said: "This is absolute nonsense. Harry Redknapp was approached by the players' representative and asked if he would allow the two players to train with the club while they were on a visit to London. Harry said yes and is simply doing them a favour — we have no interest in signing these players whatsoever. The players are paying their own

expenses while they are over here."

The confusion arose after reports from Southeast Asia claimed that a deal had been completed. A spokesman for Choi's club, LG Cheetahs, who noted that Perugia, the Italian club, had paid £2 million for Hidekoshi Nakata, of Japan, said: "Choi's transfer money is the biggest in history for an Asian player."

To add weight to the story, Choi had reportedly told journalists: "I'm very pleased. This is a dream come true. I always wanted to play in Europe. I'm all the more pleased because I am going to Great Britain, homeland of football. I'll do my best, keeping in mind that South Korea is going to co-host the 2002 World Cup."

Choi, 6ft tall and nicknamed The Eagle because of his speed and ability to read the game, was a key member of the South Korea squad at

the World Cup finals in France last year. He scored seven goals in seven appearances in the Asian qualifying matches for France 98.

Meanwhile, Les Scheinflug, the Australia youth soccer coach, demanded yesterday that the England Under-16 side's 2-1 victory over Cyprus in a European championship qualifying match be overturned because they fielded an Australian player.

McMaster has been the subject of a tug-of-war between Soccer Australia and Leeds United. McMaster's family emigrated to Australia from Scotland in 1977. He played for Australia in an under-17 international against Japan in Adelaide last year. Scheinflug said: "He has not been cleared by the New South Wales Soccer Federation or by Soccer

Australia. What right have they to play him?"

Peter Thorne, the general manager of the New South Wales Soccer Federation (NSWSF), said that McMaster had been given a provisional clearance by the Football Association through Fifa, the world governing body. However, Thorne stressed that the NSWSF had refused to clear him to play for England.

Thorne wants Fifa to develop a compensation package to protect Australian federations that invest heavily in players, only to see them opt to represent other countries.

Some Australian coaches and administrators contend that Leeds United, annoyed at losing Harry Keewell to Australia team duty, have entered an agreement with Westfields High School, where McMaster studied. They claim that under the deal the Sydney school directs to Leeds young players who are able to qualify for England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

FOOTBALL IN BRIEF

Full house to cheer Keegan's first game

ENGLAND'S first game under Kevin Keegan is a sell-out. Tickets to see the European championship qualifying match against Poland at Wembley on March 27 were snapped up within 36 hours of going on sale. A capacity 75,000 will be packed into the national stadium, although the game was sold out before Keegan's appointment.

Martin Corrie, a Wembley spokesman, said that the demand for tickets had rivalled that for England's World Cup qualifying match against Italy two years ago but that new high-tech box-office facilities had enabled tickets to be sold more quickly.

Gareth Barry, the Aston Villa central defender, will celebrate his 18th birthday today by signing a five-year contract with the club. Barry agreed the deal, which will keep him at Villa Park until the summer of 2004, in December, but will today formally put pen to paper.

Alun Armstrong, the Middlesbrough striker, has had to delay his long-awaited comeback after injuring a hamstring in training. Armstrong has not played since sustaining a pre-season Achilles tendon injury and will now be out of action for another month.

Wales are considering an appeal against Uefa's decision not to allow them to switch the European championship qualifying match against Denmark on June 9 from Anfield to Ninian Park.

Colin Addison has been appointed manager of Scarborough, who are bottom of the Nationwide League third division. Addison, 58, has been given a contract until the end of next season.

Gabriel Amato, signed by Rangers from Real Mallorca last summer, could be on his way back to Spain. Atletico Madrid, who need cover for the injured strikers, Kiko and Fernando Correa, are considering a bid.

Andy Gray, the Nottingham Forest winger, has joined Preston North End on a month's loan, with a view to a permanent move.

SAILING

Cup funds hampering Britain

IT IS now beginning to look certain that Great Britain will be represented in the 2000 America's Cup, which begins in Auckland later this year (Edward Gorman writes). However, a continuing shortage of funds in the Spirit of Britain syndicate leaves in question the scale and quality of the challenge.

"After a long and difficult search for significant commercial sponsorship backing, Professor Andrew Graves, the chairman of the Spirit of Britain, has decided to go ahead with building one boat while he continues to hunt down the necessary funds to ensure that it is properly campaigned when it reaches Auckland."

It is thought that a group of private backers together with commercial suppliers is enabling one 82ft boat to be built at Portland, Dorset, with a budget of around £15 million. Michael Humphreys, a spokesman for the syndicate that is led on the water by Lawrence Smith, said yesterday that Britain will definitely take part. "We have enough money to make a challenge, but we need more to challenge effectively," he said. This will be Britain's first appearance in an America's Cup for 12 years.

CRICKET: BOARD KEEPS ITS OPTIONS OPEN BY REINSTATING CAPTAIN FOR TWO MORE TESTS

Lara gets chance to make amends

By IVO TENNANT

IN APPOINTING Brian Lara captain for the first two Tests of West Indies' forthcoming series against Australia, the Board is giving him a chance to redeem himself after the shambolic tour of South Africa. The decision, reached after a two-day meeting in Antigua, would also have something to do with a lack of suitable alternatives.

It might, too, have been made for reasons of political expediency. The first Test of the four-match series, starting on March 5, is to be played at Port of Spain, Trinidad. Lara's home ground. The insularity that Sir Frank Worrell strove to overcome in the 1960s is apparent once more in the Caribbean: the appointment of a Jamaican or a Bajan may have led to strife on and off the pitch.

A year ago, Lara was leading West Indies to victory over England in his first series as their official captain. Since then, his form has deteriorated, as, indeed, has his reputation as a captain. His tenure in charge of Warwickshire was not a success and there was little evident unity during the tour of South Africa, which West Indies lost 5-0. The players' revolt, which he initiated before it began, did not reflect well on him.

Assuming his eyesight has not deteriorated, as has been suggested, Lara's own form should return. As to his

captaincy, he would be well advised to take more heed of the experience of Clive Lloyd, a marginalised figure as his tour manager in South Africa. He will, no doubt, spend some time on the golf course with the West Indian he respects above all others, Sir Garfield Sobers, who also had to cope with leading a side dependent on his own ability.

In England in 1969, when

several exceptional players had retired or were past their best, he, too, struggled with the bat.

Owing to the geography of the West Indies, the captaincy has long been a tangled issue. Each island is a separate territory with its own government and culture. When Lara replaced Courtney Walsh, a Jamaican, as captain for the series against England last year,

there were fears that demonstrations would take place during the first Test in Kingston. So the West Indies Board, under the presidency of Pat Rousseau, is giving Lara every chance of succeeding before his own kin in Trinidad. Fail there and in the cockpit of Sabina Park, the venue for the second Test, and there will be no shortage of vociferous cricket followers ready to tell him that Walsh or Jimmy Adams, another Jamaican, should have had the job instead.

As for inter-island rivalry, which is afflicting West Indies' unity once more, Lara will doubtless be reminded by Sobers of Worrell's attempts in his day to create "a comity of nations". West Indies' greatest captain went in 1966 that "the team has proved it is a working federal unit and the chambers of commerce, politicians and, indeed, all thinking West Indians see the necessity for regional co-operation."

West Indies were given a reminder of the tasks that lay ahead of them on the field in the weeks ahead yesterday when Australia bowled out the West Indies Board XI for 55 in Antigua. Adam Dale, the seam bowler, took seven for 24 as Australia established a first-innings lead of 101.

Bulbeck's accuracy is the deciding factor

FROM JOHN STERN IN CHRISTCHURCH

CHRISTCHURCH (England Under-19 won toss; England Under-19 beat Canterbury Emerging Players by 110 runs)

DESPITE falling at least 30 runs short of their desired total batting first, England Under-19 completed a comfortable and useful victory over Canterbury Emerging Players in their only one-day practice match before the limited overs series against New Zealand Under-19, which begins on Thursday.

Michael Gough, the captain, and Ian Flanagan, who made 93 for the second time on this tour, put on 158

for the first wicket in 28 overs, a partnership that ought to have been the foundation for a total in the region of 300. England managed only 260 for six, which, as it turned out, was more than enough. Having started well and progressed to 106 for three in the 23rd over, Canterbury capitulated to 150 all out. Matt Bulbeck, the Somerset left-arm, took the vital wicket having Marcel McKenzie caught in the deep by Marc Symington for 50.

Bulbeck, coming on as second change, took two for nine in an exceptionally accurate spell of seven overs.

England A ready for hard finale

FROM THRASY PETROPOULOS IN JOHANNESBURG

THE ENGLAND A team have arrived in South Africa for the final leg of their winter tour. After the success of Zimbabwe, where both the international and limited-overs series were won convincingly, they are certain to come up against a higher standard of opposition. They will play two matches, the first against a province, Gauteng, at the Wanderers, beginning tomorrow, and then a five-day match against the President's XI.

When this tour was originally conceived the intention had been to stage a fuller itinerary in South Africa with an additional, shorter visit to Zimbabwe. With West Indies involved in a five-Test series against South Africa, the United Cricket Board (UCB), however, unable to host a full A tour. Consequently, this visit is being funded completely by the England and Wales Cricket Board.

Finances apart, the logistic difficulties the UCB encountered became apparent yesterday when confusion emerged over the venue for the match against the President's XI. Originally scheduled to be played in Cape Town, the recent success of Western Province has seen them reach second place in the domestic first-class league here and, depending on the outcome of their next match, they may claim home advantage in the final. In that instance, a new venue for the game — most likely Port Elizabeth — will have to be found.

Of more immediate concern will be the four-day encounter against Gauteng, who have rested Ken Rutherford, their captain, and former New Zealand skipper, and are likely to give opportunities to several coloured players in line with the UCB's initiative to increase the racial mix of the sport here.

FOR THE RECORD

BASKETBALL

INTERNATIONAL MATCHES: Switzerland 89 Scotland 85 (in New York). NATIONAL ASSOCIATION (NBA): Atlanta 88 Chicago 77, Cleveland 87 Philadelphia 108, Orlando 107 Sacramento 88, Denver 117, Los Angeles Lakers 113 (OT), Minnesota 89, San Antonio 88, Phoenix 101 Dallas 88, Utah 104 Los Angeles Clippers 88.

CAMBRIDGE LENT RACES

MEET: Second division: Peterhouse 1st, Sidney Sussex 2nd, St Catharine's 3rd, 1st and 2nd Trinity 4th, 3rd Trinity 5th, 4th Trinity 6th, 5th Trinity 7th, 6th Trinity 8th, 7th Trinity 9th, 8th Trinity 10th, 9th Trinity 11th, 10th Trinity 12th, 11th Trinity 13th, 12th Trinity 14th, 13th Trinity 15th, 14th Trinity 16th, 15th Trinity 17th, 16th Trinity 18th, 17th Trinity 19th, 18th Trinity 20th, 19th Trinity 21st, 20th Trinity 22nd, 21st Trinity 23rd, 22nd Trinity 24th, 23rd Trinity 25th, 24th Trinity 26th, 25th Trinity 27th, 26th Trinity 28th, 27th Trinity 29th, 28th Trinity 30th, 29th Trinity 31st, 30th Trinity 32nd, 31st Trinity 33rd, 32nd Trinity 34th, 33rd Trinity 35th, 34th Trinity 36th, 35th Trinity 37th, 36th Trinity 38th, 37th Trinity 39th, 38th Trinity 40th, 39th Trinity 41st, 40th Trinity 42nd, 41st Trinity 43rd, 42nd Trinity 44th, 43rd Trinity 45th, 44th Trinity 46th, 45th Trinity 47th, 46th Trinity 48th, 47th Trinity 49th, 48th Trinity 50th, 49th Trinity 51st, 50th Trinity 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ATHLETICS

Ladejo set to take the money and run

By DAVID POWELL
ATHLETICS CORRESPONDENT

THERE will be some prize-money, though not much, at stake today when Duane Ladejo runs his first 400 metres for Great Britain since the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. How Ladejo, the European indoor and outdoor champion who gave up both titles for life as a decathlete, wishes it was more.

Five years ago, Ladejo denied Roger Black a third successive European outdoor gold medal and, 18 months later, won a second successive continental indoor title. No longer, though, does he enjoy the annual £100,000-plus a year in endorsements, or the five-figure appearance fees.

Still striving for his breakthrough as a decathlete, Ladejo has no sponsor and draws nothing from lottery funding. He has debts but he is happy. "I am not claiming poverty," Ladejo said yesterday. "This is my choice and I love it. The decathlon has revived me."

In two years as a decathlete, Ladejo has made sound if unspectacular progress. He finished as the top Briton at the Commonwealth Games, in seventh, but is still more than 300 points short of 8,000, the benchmark of world class.

"Hopefully this year I will be able to put out some world-class performances in the decathlon," Ladejo said. So determined is he that, when he travels to Maastricht, Japan, for the 400 metres at the world indoor championships next week, he will maintain his training in other events.

Why, then, is Ladejo back running 400s, albeit temporarily? "I need the money," he said. "I would not be going to the world championships if there was no prize-money and no way would I be doing 400s. My focus is not so much on winning as on the \$50,000."

Victory in the six-nations international in Genoa today would earn Ladejo just \$1,000 but it all helps and he needs the race to sharpen for Maastricht. Even if he fails to finish in the prize-money in the individual race in Japan, the strength of the British relay team almost guarantees a deposit into his bank account.

TENNIS: CZECH DENOUNCES RUSEDKI FOR COMMENTS ON HIS POSITIVE STEROID TEST

Drug issue continues to hound Korda

By JULIAN MUSCAT, TENNIS CORRESPONDENT

A DIFFERENT sort of welcome awaited Petr Korda when he played at the Guardian Direct Cup 12 months ago. The Czech player arrived in London fresh from winning the Australian Open, his first grand-slam title, and hot on the trail of Pete Sampras's place at the top of the game.

Now Korda languishes at No 75 in the world rankings. The positive drugs test he submitted at Wimbledon seven months ago has besmirched his reputation. He is deep into the twilight of his career and his game is in tatters.

After escaping a ban when traces of nandrolone, an anabolic steroid, was found in his urine, Korda, 31, spoke of postponing his retirement to clear his name and finish with a flourish. There is no hint, no suggestion at all that he might recapture his former glories. He remains a slightly isolated figure, his furrowed features telling of a man on whose shoulders the doping problem has rested heavily. It has certainly hijacked his form post-Wimbledon—as evidenced by a string of first-round losses.

Given the cloud surrounding his participation, it is probably as well that he never did overhaul Sampras, a leader by example, both on and off the court. His silence on the issue would have been that much harder to bear.

As it is, the tennis community waits while the legal process runs its course. Perhaps Korda will then furnish the doubters with his account of how he came to test positive after his quarter-final defeat by Tim Henman.

However, it emerged yesterday that they may have to wait a little longer. Korda intimated that he might not be willing to speak at all. He escaped a mandatory one-year ban when, under the terms of the anti-doping programme, he

stated that he did not knowingly take the offending steroid. He has since rebutted all efforts to illicit a satisfactory explanation on the legal pretext that the International Tennis Federation continues to appeal against the ruling.

A final verdict on the appeal process is expected by the end of next month. But yesterday, after beating Wayne Ferreira, 6-3, 6-4 at Battersea, Korda said: "I don't know if I will ever talk about it. It is not in my hands. I know what happened and it is not an easy situation. Once I quit, maybe a few months after that, I could make some comments."

He also denounced players, including Greg Rusedski, who used the media to express their views on his predicament. "Any player can challenge me face to face instead of laughing behind me," he said. "I am following the rules and no one has the right to clean my house out. Greg doesn't know the rules or about my case," he continued, "but I am not going to be offensive to anyone."

Korda's words added spice to his possible second-round encounter with Rusedski, who opened his campaign last night against Gianluigi Pozzi of Italy. More relaxed in his mind was Thomas Johansson, who registered a victory over Petr Luxa, a qualifier from the Czech Republic, 6-2, 6-4.

Johansson, seeded No 8, will remember his win over an opponent ranked No 212 for one reason. It was the Swede's first of the year after first-round exits in Doha, Sydney and Melbourne. Still, it is not a bad life. Johansson earned \$21,000 (around £13,000) for losing those matches.

Yevgeny Kafelnikov, for one, will have welcomed Johansson's reviving fortunes. He must beat the Swede in their projected quarter-final on Friday, thereby earning



Korda serves during his win over Wayne Ferreira in Battersea Park, London, yesterday

valuable bonus ranking points, to wrest the No 1 spot from Sampras. Anything less and the Russian will be obliged to progress to the final.

Cedric Pioline, the beaten finalist last year, collapsed at the first hurdle this time against the enigmatic Nicolas Pietrangeli, of Germany. In succumbing over three sets in the quarter-finals in Rotterdam last week, Pioline lost both the tie-breaks he played against Rusedski. A similar fate befell him here as Kiefer rallied to

oust the Frenchman 5-7, 6-2, 7-5 after just over 2½ hours.

Henman, who opens tomorrow against a Slovakian in Jan Krosak, learnt yesterday that victory would pitch him against another in Dominik Hrbaty, who bettered Stefano Pescosolido. Hrbaty prevailed 6-3, 6-7, 6-2 in another lengthy encounter.

A sombre mood governed events yesterday after the death of Manno Oosting, of Holland. The player was killed in a car crash when

returning home from a challenge event in France on Monday night. Several players observed a minute's silence on the court. Among them were two of his compatriots: Paul Haarhuis, who spoke eloquently of Oosting, and Rickard Krajcek, who was moved to tears.

LINKS

WEBSITE: www.stuart.com
TELEVISION: BBC2, 2.10 (highlights)

Brotherhood of beauty and the beast

SIMON BARNES



Midweek View

What do you have to do to get sent off in a rugby union match? We debated this question after the England v Scotland match with precisely that degree of seriousness that we feel is expected of sportswriters of our calibre. How about if you mowed down the entire opposition pack with an Uzi?

Nah. You'd get a pretty serious talking-to, mind you. A real finger-wagging. You No 4, whilst you know perfectly well you're not supposed to use that gun on full automatic. Next time, keep it to single shots, all right? Or I might have to give you a yellow card.

Actually, I have changed my mind about Martin Johnson. I said on Monday that he was a Cro-Magnon: further research makes it clear he is a dead ringer for the Homo erectus skull found east of Lake Turkana in 1975. The extraordinary development of the brow-ridge makes diagnosis certain.

Johnson is, I read, a big man in many ways. Mainly, it must be said, in terms of size. In demeanour he reminds me of Spiny Norman, the giant hedgehog in Monty Python who stalked the streets of London as the nemesis of Dinsdale Piranha. You can just see Johnson walking heavily-footed across the Twickenham turf, bashing out the terrible words: "Dinsdale! Dinsdale!"

Dinsdale Piranha's main form of retribution was nailing people's heads to the floor. "I wanted him to do it, like, because I'd transgressed the unwritten law."

The Times on Monday had a nice picture of Johnson nailing John Leslie's head to the floor. He used his left boot to do so — I do love a forward who is genuinely two-footed, don't you? All his weight was in the air and down he came. Look out, larynx.

Now stamping on a chap's larynx can be as lethal as snapping off half a magazine from an Uzi. And the referee was so shocked and appalled that he felt that a mere talking-to was not enough. And so he took extreme measures: a yellow card!

And this means that Johnson can't actually be punished further. This seems illogical, considering that a yellow card is not so much a punishment as a warning, but there you go. A yellow card closes the matter.

Just as Johnson stalks the field in the guise of *Homo erectus*, so beings of the more recent past stalk through every corner of rugby union. The ruling spirit is, as ever, what's-it-got-to-do-with-you? Boys will be boys, let's all kick the crap out of each other and it's all right

because we generally have 23 pints each afterwards and that's the great brotherhood of rugby union, right boys? Rugby union is in love with what is hidden, secret, set apart. Rugby union never closes ranks, because its ranks have never for a second opened. It is the very nature of the sport: the forwards line up as one man and blows and biffs are given and returned in the many-legged heart of things.

And ear-biting and stamping and punching and gouging go on because the structure of the game makes such things inevitable. Very large strong men are rolling over and over on the floor for the possession of one small thing and nobody can see what's going on.

Ruck laws change and change again but the nature of a ruck makes laws almost impossible to write, and even if perfectly written, possible to evade.

even-handedness, still less accuracy. Professionalism has not created this climate of secret violence: it has merely added one more pint of bat's blood to the cauldron.

In football you get a yellow card for looking cross and you get sent off for sneezing. The game has swung the other way. Perhaps all games performed in public in front of paying spectators must do so.

But rugby remains in thrall to the notion of secrecy and the ruck is at the heart of it all, for that matter at the very heart of rugby. And, even if the will to police the ruck exists, I doubt very much if policing it is a practical prospect. Rugby can't live with the ruck, can't live without it. There will be many more of these cases of stud-taking, punching and ear-biting.

It is simply a very violent game. That is its beauty, and its curse. Even if a genuine will to control the illegal part of that violence existed — and it does not — then rugby's officials would be forever running up the down escalator... with Spiny Norman rushing down to meet them, teeth bared. Dinsdale!

SPORT IN BRIEF

■ **CRICKET:** The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) emphasised yesterday its intention that the World Cup in England this summer should be a carnival, family affair with no bans on fancy dress or musical instruments inside grounds. It hopes to attract more women to the competition. The ECB announced that Outspan, the citrus fruit company, will be an official supplier to the World Cup and that it will undertake research on women's views about cricket. A free, magazine called *Bodyline* will help them understand the finer points.

■ **ATHLETICS:** Richard Nerurkar has been forced to withdraw from the 1999 Flora London Marathon on medical advice. Nerurkar, of Britain, fifth in the 1997 event, said: "I've struggled to find my best form in training and competition and following a series of medical tests I've had over the past three weeks, I have been advised to take an extended period of quiet training."

■ **HOCKEY:** Mike Corby, who has made 59 appearances for England and 33 for Great Britain, has been nominated by the Middlesex County Hockey Association to stand for the position of vice-president of the English Hockey Association at the forthcoming annual general meeting. He is at present vice-president of the English Squash Rackets Association and the world federation.

RUGBY LEAGUE

Video referee's debut delayed

By CHRISTOPHER IRVINE

A VIDEO referee will make a first appearance at Wembley for the Silk Cut Challenge Cup final on May 1. Rulings on close try-scoring decisions referred by the referee will be made from television pictures and relayed by red and green lights visible to the crowd, as in cricket.

The system was to have been used in the televised fifth-round matches between Leeds Rhinos and St Helens last Saturday and Warrington Wolves and Halifax Blue Sox last Sunday. However, because of technical problems, its debut has been delayed until the quarter-finals next month.

The light-board has been a feature of the Australian game for a couple of seasons, while the video screen, as pioneered in coverage of live Super League matches on BSkyB in 1996, has become an accepted, if expensive, means of judging contentious scoring decisions.

The Rugby Football League (RFL) is anxious to learn more about reports from Australia that have cast doubt on the tri-nations series between Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand in October and November.

Problems with forward planning and the shelving of a

World Cup in Australia last year looked to have been resolved with a series of international initiatives put in place, including the rescheduling of the World Cup for 2000 in Britain, by the new Rugby League International Federation (RLIF).

However, Gerald Ryan, the New Zealand Rugby League chairman, has reportedly threatened to withdraw New Zealand unless Australia table a business plan for the tri-nations, while David Barnhill, the Australian Rugby League general manager, has been quoted as saying that a decision whether to proceed with the annual series against the Kiwis or admit Britain had not yet been made.

The RFL is seeking assurances before the RLIF meeting in Sydney next month, otherwise the game's international reputation will be dealt another damaging blow. The World Nines, due to have been held in Johannesburg last month, were cancelled by the South African Rugby League because of a lack of television guarantees, which has put a question mark against a proposed game there between Britain and New Zealand in November.

SPORTS POLITICS: GOVERNMENT TO ANNOUNCE NEW NETWORK FOR TRAINING

Regional centres to groom our talent

By JOHN GOODBODY

JOHN MAJOR'S vision of Britain having a £160 million Academy of Sport to groom stars is finally over. The Government will announce on Monday that there will be a network of ten regional centres in England, with Sheffield, once picked as its hub, now downgraded to becoming just one of these facilities for training.

Instead of being the glittering centre for reviving Britain's sporting prestige, only a handful of sports will be using the proposed site in

the Lower Don Valley. However, Sheffield will still house the centre for sports science, medicine and research. The original plan, announced four years ago by the former Prime Minister, included an academy, offering residential places for 500 young people, who would improve their sporting ability while pursuing academic subjects.

The scheme will please most national governing bodies, which originally

opposed Major's plans for a UK Sports Institute (UKSI) but had to wait until after the change of government in 1997 to be heard. David Sparkes, the chief executive of the Amateur Swimming Association, said yesterday: "We have got what sport wanted — a series of network regional sites. But we have wasted at least two years in getting there."

Some sports, such as football and cricket, want their own specialist national

centres, and did not want to be part of an all-embracing central academy.

The network of ten regional facilities, including Bath and Loughborough, will accommodate many outstanding competitors closer to their homes. The £160 million of National Lottery money, originally earmarked for the UKSI, will still be used for the capital projects, but only £40 million will be given to Sheffield, split between its regional facilities and the sports medicine and research centre.

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

By ROBERT SHEEHAN, BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

Luckily, as in golf, there are no pictures on the score-card at bridge. My antics on this hand from the 1998 Gold Cup final went unnoticed by the rest of the team when we only lost 1 IMP on the board.

Dealer East	N-S game	IMPs
<p> ♠ A 8 5 ♥ 10 7 6 4 2 ♦ Q J ♣ — </p>	<p> ♠ K Q 10 3 ♥ A 7 3 ♦ 8 3 ♣ K 6 5 </p> <p> ♠ J 7 2 ♥ K J 5 ♦ K Q 5 ♣ 9 7 3 2 </p>	

Contract: Four Hearts by South. Lead: ten of diamonds.

After East passed I opened One Heart, and my partner Howard Cohen put me into Four Hearts. After the diamond lead my chances were poor, though as it happens, I have no club loser if I guess that suit correctly. Also the spade situation is exceptionally favourable. If I lead twice towards the king-queen, West gives me three tricks in the suit if he rises with the ace, and if he ducks twice my spade loser disappears.

To cater for this spade holding I won East's queen of diamonds and played a spade. West (Terry Goldsmith) went in with the ace straight away. Had he continued diamonds there would have been no story, but he switched to the queen of clubs.

I won in hand, cashed the ace of hearts and took two spade tricks, discarding my diamond loser. When East (Gerald Soper) followed with the jack of spades on the

third round it seemed safe enough to play a fourth spade. I presumed he would ruff from either king-jack or jack alone, so effectively it was like playing a trump.

However, Soper discarded. Now I placed West with both outstanding trumps, and so ruffed dummy's remaining diamond and exited with a heart from hand. I hoped West would have to win and play a club away from his jack.

Unfortunately it was East who had the two trump tricks, and after he had cashed them and correctly played a club, there was a nervous moment when I put in the eight. But the jack appeared, and when we scored up I was able to reply casually "one away" when my team-mates announced "minus 650".

Robert Sheehan writes on bridge Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

WORD-WATCHING

By Philip Howard

HEDERIGERENT
a. A female regent
b. Cantankerous
c. Wearing ivy

HYGROMA
a. A tumour
b. A sea monster
c. A seaweed

HARMATTAN
a. A wind
b. A New York district
c. A Muslim feast

Answers on page 46

KEENE on CHESS

By RAYMOND KEENE, CHESS CORRESPONDENT

Joint lead

After two rounds of the elite tournament in Linares, Spain, two players share the lead: Garry Kasparov, the world champion, who scored a rare win as Black against Ivanchuk, and Michael Adams, of Great Britain.

White: Vassily Ivanchuk
Black: Garry Kasparov
Linares 1999

Sicilian Defence	
1 e4 c5	
2 Nf3 d6	
4 Nxd4	Nf6
5 Nc3	Ng4
6 Bc3	h6
7 Bg5	g5
8 Bxf4	Bg7
9 Bg3	Nc6
10 Qd2	Nb5
11 Nc3	Nf5
12 Bf2	Rb8
13 Nd4	b4
14 Nd1	Nbd4
15 Nd4	d5
16 Bxd4	Qxd5
17 e4	c5
18 c3	O-O
19 Bc2	Rd8
20 Qe3	Bb7
21 Nf2	bxc3
22 Bxc3	Qe6
23 Kf1	Bd5
24 b3	Rb6
25 Rd1	Rc3
26 Qc3	Ng4
27 Qe5	Nc3+
28 Kf1	Rd8
29 Qe6	Nd1
30 Qe5	Ba6
31 Bc1	Re1

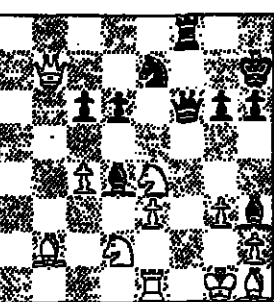
White resigns

Ruy Lopez
1 e4 e5
2 Nf3 Nc6
3 Bb5 a6
4 Bc4

By Raymond Keene

Black to play. This position is from the game Mayer-Nakamura, Washington 1998. How did Black make the most of his powerful pair of bishops?

Solution on page 46



سكراية الاموال

Gay drama that's all mouth and no trousers

Unlike, say, Texas, which has no homosexuals — not still alive at any rate — Manchester has a thriving gay community around Canal Street, an area where community spirit manifests itself in the locals regularly popping into each other's houses for a bowl of sugar but by the locals regularly popping into each other. For those of you who don't get out much, Channel 4 brought the mountain to Muhammad last night when it finally dragged its noisy new drama, *Queer As Folk*, out of the closet. So, did you find the experience more enjoyable than you'd been expecting? Fancy coming back for more of the same next week?

There's no getting round the homosexuality. Treating *Queer As Folk* as just another TV drama — which just happens to feature guys — is like pretending Cyranos de Bergerac is like any other bloke, though, now you mention it, he

does seem to have the most whopping nose. It's funny that I didn't notice it before. Cyranos is half man, half nose. But what makes him captivating is that he's a romantic, shy, poetic, love-struck, selfless, tragic man who is trapped by other people's obsessions with his hooter. People can't see past his nose, literally or figuratively. It's not that he wants people to act as if he doesn't have a nose as big as Apollo 13, but he does want people to see beyond it. So, if we look beyond the gayness in *Queer As Folk*, is there anything more complex there? Or is it about guys the way *Emanuel* is about sex — that is, if Sylvia Kristel didn't get her kit off every four minutes you'd just as soon go to bed and read *Investor's Chronicle*. I think there probably is more, but *Queer As Folk* is trying so hard to tempt prurient viewers into being affronted that it's in danger of making the rest of us

slightly bored while it gets its bravado out of its system. At times it was like listening to a precocious child who thinks he's impressing the world by using needlessly long words: most of which he manages to mispronounce slightly, thereby fraying the effect a bit. The whole thing moves along at a zippy pace (unzippy too, obviously). It is sharply written, by Russell T. Davies, it's madly glossy (Manchester's gays live in lots so spacious you could play the FA Cup Final in them). And — like *Sex and the City* — another series which Channel 4 has been trying desperately hard to have lambasted by an outraged press, and which was also set in an improbably glossy world — it is well acted: Aidan Gillen, the rich, handsome, 29-year-old under whom the action (and half of Manchester's gay community) revolves, carries his air of smug,



self-satisfied rapture so well that it makes orgasms seem superfluous. Charles McDougall's direction is so fast you need to hold a cab to keep up. But so far, it's slightly unengaging. If *Queer As Folk* didn't have the novelty of gay sex, would anyone have made the same fuss about it? Or got excited about it in a positive way, rather than just because they were

outraged by its depiction of under-age man-boy sex? It has a certain cynicism that could just be a stab at chic metropolitan know-it-allness, but you can imagine it leaving a nasty taste in many viewers' mouths. Brighton, of course, used to be the place to find queers, peers and rucksters. Now it has Julie Burchill. "It is a horrible thing to say," said Toby Young in *Close Up: Who Does Julie Burchill Think She Is?* (BBC2), "but if she'd been killed in a car crash, about five years ago, that would have been perfect. It's as though Elvis, or Marilyn Monroe, or John Lennon hadn't died, and they'd hung around and they'd become these awful parodies of themselves." Can you tell that Toby and Julie had a small falling-out? Burchill calls herself a "one-trick pony, but I do it quite well," and Nikki Hinnman and Simon Chu's lively documentary seemed to be

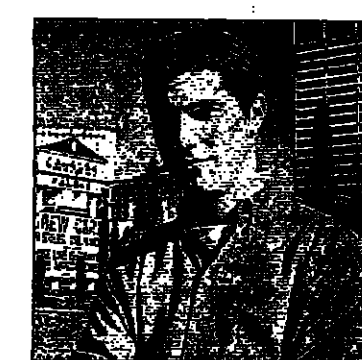
wondering if this 39-year-old pony was now fit only for the knacker's yard. Young — whom Burchill wanted to replace as editor of *Modern Review* (the magazine she mostly financed) with a young girl with whom she had fallen in love — was the loudest voice for the prosecution.

Most of the other witnesses seemed to feel that even if the pony wasn't quite as frisky in print as she was in her heyday, she can still kick like a mule in a way that poorer columnists can't. And with Burchill you're never sure when her next heyday might be. Her career hasn't traced a conventional rise-and-fall trajectory. It has moved, rather, like the bouncing bomb: every time you think it might be going under, it leaps upwards for another bounce. As she pointed out, there are so many Burchills out there that

every now and then an editor turns up who thinks, why not pay a little more and hire the real thing? Her shamelessness, fearlessness, honesty, and her pathological need to shock, along with her unshakeable self-belief, could produce an unpalatable cocktail, but her skill is that she has made them work often dazzlingly.

Workers At War (BBC1) showed what happens when the staff want more serious revenge than verbal feuding. Toby Young took his revenge against Burchill by closing down her magazine. To feature in last night's *Workers At War* he'd have had to burn down her house too. Here were people — angry at being sacked, or not hired, or unpaid — who didn't know where to draw the line when they got mad. It's usually best to forgive and forget. But it's true that it's much easier to forgive once you've got even.

- BBC1**
- 6.00am Business Breakfast (83076)
 - 7.00am BBC Breakfast News (12415)
 - 9.00am The News (12415)
 - 9.45am The News (12415)
 - 10.55am News: Weather (12415)
 - 11.00am Change That (817756)
 - 11.25am Can't Cook, Won't Cook (12415)
 - 11.55am News: Weather (12415)
 - 12.00pm Call My Bluff (80714)
 - 12.30pm The Weather Show (12415)
 - 1.00pm The Weather Show (12415)
 - 1.30pm Regional News: Weather (12415)
 - 1.40pm Neighbours: Mike moves into Ramsey Street (12415)
 - 2.05pm The Weather Show (12415)
 - 2.55pm The Weather Show (12415)
 - 3.25pm The Weather Show (12415)
 - 3.45pm The Weather Show (12415)
 - 4.10pm The Weather Show (12415)
 - 4.35pm The Weather Show (12415)
 - 5.10pm The Weather Show (12415)
 - 5.35pm The Weather Show (12415)
 - 6.00pm The Weather Show (12415)
 - 6.30pm Regional News: Weather (12415)



Craig Doyle introduces a selection of bargain holiday ideas (7pm)

- 7.00pm Holiday on a Shoestring New series. Craig Doyle presents the best in bargain holidays (1/6) (12415)
- 7.30pm Tomorrow's World New presenter Lindsey Fallow reports on a revolutionary design for crash helmets (12415)
- 8.00pm Changing Rooms: Two Knebworth homes are made over (12415)
- 8.30pm The National Lottery: Amazing Luck Stories (12415)
- 9.00pm The National Lottery: Amazing Luck Stories (12415)
- 9.30pm The National Lottery: Amazing Luck Stories (12415)
- 9.50pm The National Lottery: Amazing Luck Stories (12415)
- 10.00pm The X-Files: A priest enlists the agents' help when a young disabled girl's body is found (12415)
- 10.45pm The X-Files: A priest enlists the agents' help when a young disabled girl's body is found (12415)
- 11.15pm The X-Files: A priest enlists the agents' help when a young disabled girl's body is found (12415)
- 11.45pm The X-Files: A priest enlists the agents' help when a young disabled girl's body is found (12415)
- 12.00pm The X-Files: A priest enlists the agents' help when a young disabled girl's body is found (12415)
- 12.30pm The X-Files: A priest enlists the agents' help when a young disabled girl's body is found (12415)
- 12.55pm The X-Files: A priest enlists the agents' help when a young disabled girl's body is found (12415)
- 1.30pm The X-Files: A priest enlists the agents' help when a young disabled girl's body is found (12415)

- 10.45pm The X-Files: A priest enlists the agents' help when a young disabled girl's body is found (12415)
- 11.15pm The X-Files: A priest enlists the agents' help when a young disabled girl's body is found (12415)
- 11.45pm The X-Files: A priest enlists the agents' help when a young disabled girl's body is found (12415)
- 12.00pm The X-Files: A priest enlists the agents' help when a young disabled girl's body is found (12415)
- 12.30pm The X-Files: A priest enlists the agents' help when a young disabled girl's body is found (12415)
- 12.55pm The X-Files: A priest enlists the agents' help when a young disabled girl's body is found (12415)
- 1.30pm The X-Files: A priest enlists the agents' help when a young disabled girl's body is found (12415)

- BBC2**
- 7.00am Children's BBC Breakfast Show: Tales of the Tooth Fairies 7.05 Teletubbies 7.30am The Teletubbies 7.35am The Teletubbies 7.40am The Teletubbies 7.45am The Teletubbies 7.50am The Teletubbies 7.55am The Teletubbies 8.00am The Teletubbies 8.05am The Teletubbies 8.10am The Teletubbies 8.15am The Teletubbies 8.20am The Teletubbies 8.25am The Teletubbies 8.30am The Teletubbies 8.35am The Teletubbies 8.40am The Teletubbies 8.45am The Teletubbies 8.50am The Teletubbies 8.55am The Teletubbies 9.00am The Teletubbies 9.05am The Teletubbies 9.10am The Teletubbies 9.15am The Teletubbies 9.20am The Teletubbies 9.25am The Teletubbies 9.30am The Teletubbies 9.35am The Teletubbies 9.40am The Teletubbies 9.45am The Teletubbies 9.50am The Teletubbies 9.55am The Teletubbies 10.00am The Teletubbies 10.05am The Teletubbies 10.10am The Teletubbies 10.15am The Teletubbies 10.20am The Teletubbies 10.25am The Teletubbies 10.30am The Teletubbies 10.35am The Teletubbies 10.40am The Teletubbies 10.45am 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RACING 43

Favourite for 1,000
Guineas sustains
fatal injury on gallops

SPORT

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 24 1999

GOLF 46

World's finest gather
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Old guard comes under heavy fire

Baron seeks to drive RFU forward

By DAVID HANDS, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

FRANCIS BARON, the Rugby Football Union's (RFU) chief executive for no more than five months, delivered a withering critique yesterday of the ills that have cost the RFU so much in financial and moral terms. "If this were a plc," Baron said, "heads would have rolled long ago."

It is Baron's brief to make the RFU the "financial powerhouse" of rugby in the British Isles within the next three years. To do so, he must drag it out of the morass of bureaucracy and debt that has accumulated over the past four years and restore the authority that once came naturally to the country that founded the game but whose popularity in world terms has never been lower.

He painted a bleak picture, when he joined last October, of demoralised staff embracing a "culture of resignation", of a lack of responsibility and accountability or of any formal business plans, of regular reports from the union's different areas within a governing body including 56 committees generating a "mountain of paperwork".

Although the union has budgeted for a £1.4 million loss in the present financial year, Baron estimates that it will be more like £2.3 million given legal costs and the poor financial return from England's World Cup qualifying games at Huddersfield. Budge Rogers, the RFU junior vice-president who has produced a report on the future structure of the union, was equally sombre.

"I was appalled, returning to the game after a long time away, by what had gone on in the RFU Council," Rogers said. "Discussion of minutiae by over 50 people, not just at one meeting but at the next

and the next." It is his task to convince a special meeting of the union on March 28 of the need to reduce the council members to around 43, to reduce the number of committees to three and to strengthen the existing constituent bodies.

When Rogers, as a player, sat on Sir George Mallaby's review of the RFU in 1972, the union's turnover was £130,000. Now it is more than £30 million and has the potential to be ten times that figure if Baron, who has already slashed staffing levels by nearly 20 per cent, can achieve his "lean and focused" management levels and offer the union's potential commercial partners a governing body "organised in a way they can understand and respect".

Not the least of the union's woes has been the increased amount of money paid to consultants and lawyers; over the past two years the RFU has lost £10.3 million yet increased staff by 59 per cent and, in the past financial year, legal fees doubled to £520,600. Since then, the union has been

finned twice by the International Rugby Board (IRB), quite apart from the brief period when England were suspended from the Five Nations Championship.

"We want to restore good working relationships with the IRB and are considering the best way of achieving that," Baron said. He also hopes to sit down with his Five Nations colleagues to discuss the accord over the championship, after England's failure to acknowledge it swiftly enough caused the temporary rupture last month. It clearly remains an irritant to England that the contributions of France and, next season, Italy to commercial arrangements for the championship have yet to be defined.

"We are not going to adopt a passive attitude going forward," Baron said, in an acknowledgement that since he took up his post, the RFU has been firefighting on several fronts. Yet his management board has yet to determine its stance on payment of IRB fines — administered over the complaint by English clubs to the European Commission and the Anglo-Welsh series — and must do so early next month when the appeal period will have ended.

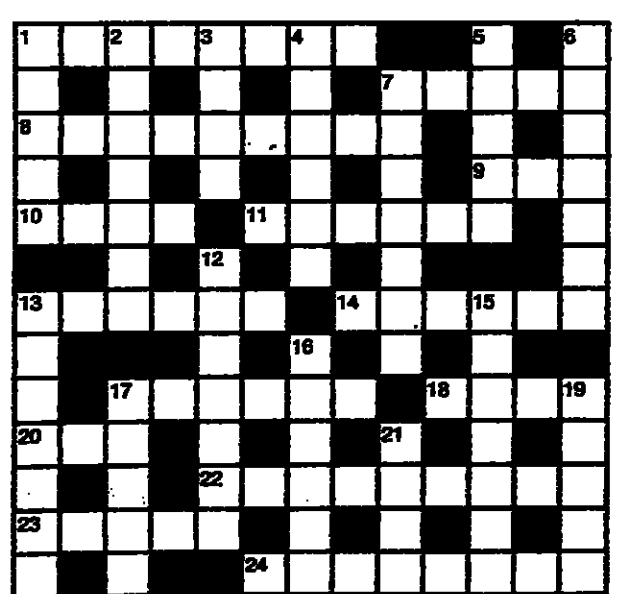
"We are maintaining a dialogue with the IRB because we both want to find the right way forward," Baron said. An appeal would only add to the union's mounting legal costs, as would any further disputes with leading clubs in the event of, say, Bristol pushing through a wholesale merger with London Scottish or Cardiff buying into an Allied Dumbur Premiership club. Baron acknowledges the loopholes existing in rugby's regulations, which were framed for a less commercial — and litigious — era, but insists that new rules cannot be rushed through if they do not take account of national and European law.

Simon Barnes, page 45



Baron: bleak picture

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 1649

- ACROSS
- 1 Killing the king (8)
 - 7 A soap (5)
 - 8 Future generations (9)
 - 9 Droop (3)
 - 10 Fight of honour (4)
 - 11 Withdraw (heresy) (6)
 - 13 London suburb; type of comedy (6)
 - 14 A reflector (6)
 - 17 Elaborately decorated (6)
 - 18 Rough edge: West Country r sound (4)
 - 20 Swindle: pain: college servant (3)
 - 22 Government admin (street) (9)
 - 23 Make straight (5)
 - 24 Keep in mind (8)

- DOWN
- 1 Swift (5)
 - 2 Mrs —, wrote Cranford (7)
 - 3 Head of kitchen (4)
 - 4 Spout rubbish (6)
 - 5 Litoral: freewheel (5)
 - 6 Less smooth (7)
 - 7 Egypt monument (7)
 - 12 Mysterious (7)
 - 13 Mourful: type of couplet (7)
 - 15 Edible plant: crowd-scene word (7)
 - 16 Dismantle (camp, set): pin-demonishing bowl (6)
 - 17 Whence: Masfield's quinquennium (5)
 - 19 Governor (5)
 - 21 Historian monk: sounds like droplet (4)

SOLUTION TO NO 1648

- ACROSS: 1 Hepworth 5 Hope 7 Recurrently 8 Span 9 Extant 10 Entomb 13 Hag 14 Derive 17 Obols 18 Hire 19 Megalomania 20 Next 21 Kingship
DOWN: 1 Hogshead 2 Wren 3 Round the clock 4 Here we go again 5 Honest 6 Phlegm 7 Raft 11 Olivia 12 Butler up 15 Effort 16 Intact 18 Hiss

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